

BELGIAN  
CONGO

VOLUME I

BELGIAN CONGO

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# BELGIAN CONGO

## Volume I

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*by*  
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## **FOREWORD**



*The literature dealing with the Congo is abundant ; in the course of recent years especially it has been enriched in every field and has taken many different forms.*

*In the presence of this wealth of information the traveler, the public man, the scholar, and the student, desirous of getting acquainted with everything concerning our colony, sometimes find themselves perplexed.*

*The Office de l'Information et des Relations Publiques du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi (Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi Information and Public Relations Office) has deemed it useful to place at the public's disposal a sort of digest in the form of a handy volume that condenses and co-ordinates the copious and scattered material extant on the subject.*

*But a book of this nature involves an unavoidable risk : the Congo is undergoing a rapid evolution ; it is in a state of perpetual transformation, and is thoroughly alive and constantly in motion.*

*The works dealing with our overseas territories become outdated with disconcerting rapidity. Every writer who travels in central Africa today discovers a new Congo ; each one believes he has given a lasting picture of the country, but no sooner has he outlined it than it vanishes or is transformed. The political, administrative and judicial life of the country is undergoing sweeping*



*reforms and the data that is valid today may be obsolete tomorrow. Our book could not fail to recognize the ephemeral and precarious nature of certain aspects of the information it has undertaken to present. Therefore, in addition to this main volume, which shows the Congo from a more general point of view, and will suffer less from the swift changes so characteristic of current events, we have been led to plan a second volume which will be periodically published and will contain statistical and technical documentation illustrating or supplementing the data given in this first volume. The second volume will also give a bibliography and notably indications of the sources on which the reading matter has been based, indications which have not been mentioned in the text in order not to weigh it down.*

*For the work as a whole, we have secured the service of a specialist for each of the topics treated ; they have taken pains to supply an account that gives only the essentials but is at the same time as complete and up-to-date as possible.*

*We hope to have thus offered the public a reference work whose value will not be short-lived. Perhaps in spite of everything this book will be speedily outstripped by an evolution which is that of life itself, but it will preserve at least a reflection of the Congo as it appears today, fifty years after the time when its founder confided its destinies to the Belgian people.*

Gaston HEENEN

*Honorary Vice-Governor-General of the  
Belgian Congo.*

*President of the Office de l'Information et  
des Relations Publiques pour le Congo Belge  
et le Ruanda-Urundi.*

## PART I

# THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE

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## 1.

### The Congo, a Changing and Complex Country.

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Like all Africa, the Congo at first sight conveys an impression of compactness and massiveness ; it is an enormous block of nearly a million square miles that seems to have been carved with bold strokes of the chisel out of the very heart of the continent. It can easily be inscribed in a gigantic quadrilateral.

Like all Africa, the Congo produces an illusion of unity and simplicity ; but again like all Africa, its compactness conceals unsuspected complexity. The very word « Congo » evokes pictures that come readily to the mind — sultry heat, forests, rains. Reality blots out these pictures. There is no Congolese world or environment that falls into a few broad categories ; there are Congolese worlds and environments that are infinite in their variety. Indeed, the country is saturated with complexity.



First, the complexity of its landscapes. To the eyes of the hurried visitor, whether traveling by road or by air, a dreary monotony arises out of the vast stretches of land whose far horizons keep receding as he approaches; indeed, he has to journey for days to go from the savannas to the forest lands and from the forest lands to the savannas. But, beneath this conventional picture, the country — for the traveler who really wishes to know it — breaks up into a great variety of facets, to such an extent that, as a scientist has remarked, it forms « a mosaic of changing landscapes juxtaposed in the greatest disorder ».

Next, there is the complexity of the country's climate. Here too, the bookish conception of an equatorial zone bordered by two tropical zones with well-known characteristics is only a very imperfect reflection of reality. Many factors modify this all too easy classification and create a multiplicity of local climates.

As for the fauna, it is one of the richest and most complex in the world; it offers all over the country a wide variety of species conditioned by the extreme variety of the flora.

Even the Congo's subsoil is complex. Here the rock formations accumulated in the course of ages have been displaced, dislocated, shaken, and fractured, to such an extent as to be tangled up in utter confusion, confusion complicated by outcrops, sunken strata, layers broken up and reappearing at long intervals. The result is an immense mosaic.

And finally, there is the complexity of the people themselves. Once more the pattern is a mosaic: a mosaic of migratory tribes proceeding along trails that are often untraceable, and intersecting each other's paths time and again; a mosaic of languages where more than 450 different dialects exist side by side; a mosaic to which the recent arrival of Europeans and Asiatics have added new colors; a mosaic which is itself divided into many cultural strata ranging from the nomadic Pygmies of the forest to the university-trained Bantu, from the gatherer of wild fruit to the African bishop.

Therefore, in speaking of the Congo one must not make the mistake of treating it as a homogeneous unit. It is advisable to bear constantly in mind its extreme diversity and also its perpetual changes.

An old continent, Africa has a thousand changing faces. Its heart — the Congo — is in a state of perpetual evolution; there is an endless transformation in its hydrographical system and in the flow of its watercourses; transformation likewise in its zones of vegetation, its climates, its species of animals, and its soil which is eroded in one place and built up in another.

These physical phenomena are sometimes imperceptible to anyone who is not an expert. More spectacular, more evident to the layman is the double evolution that the country is experiencing and whose pace has accelerated during the past few years: the evolution in its physiognomy and in its population. Under the European influence the appearance of the land is undergoing a complete change: networks of roads and railroad lines intersect, factories spread out, and the plantations are taking on a new aspect. But what is more important, the population itself, stirred up by external factors, is changing the tempo of its existence and entering a new cycle of civilization. Throughout the country, a phenomenon is taking place whose consequence no one can calculate: the emergence of some 13 million human beings from the magma of clannish collectivity; their realization — to a greater or lesser degree — of their importance as individuals; the beginnings of their long apprenticeship in democracy; and their entrance into a way of life that is new in all its aspects.

## 2. The Physical Structure.

### A. The Geological Strata.

The Congo of today rests on an ancient foundation mass which has come into existence in the course of some three billion years. It is made up of rocky strata that were deposited in the course of ages. Chains of mountains, often complex in character, were uplifted after folding had occurred, and were later leveled down one after another. Today the foundation mass represents the essential part of the mountainous rim circling the vast depression formed by the central basin of the Congo River over an area of nearly 400,000 square miles. To this foundation with its various folds can be traced most of the mineral wealth of the country.

In the depression itself, and on the stretches extending to the peripheral mountainous rim, more recent sediments have been deposited; resting on the ancient foundation, they constitute an upper crust which has been formed in the course of the last 200 million years.

### The Foundation Mass.

Neither in the Congo nor anywhere else has any hypothetical original stratum been discovered that could be traced back to the initial cooling of the earth's crust. Even the most ancient formations are sedimentary, but these were transformed into a complex crystallophyllian rock mass in which pronounced folding occurred, and which underwent intense metamorphism. This rock mass often thrusts through on the edge of the central depression, especially in the North and the Northeast. The mineral resources found there are limited: gold, corundum, monazite, mica, limestone, manganese, and silicious iron.

On this very ancient foundation mass which constitutes the basic structure of the country, other strata have been superimposed. They began by partially covering up the foundation with circular ranges of folds measuring in some cases more than 26,000 feet in thickness; they are found chiefly in the Kibara Mountains, the Kibali Massif, the Crystal Mountains, in the region of the Lulua River, and in the Northwest; consequently, their distribution is peripheral. There is a great deal of mineral wealth here, especially in Katanga and the Kibara Mountains: tin, tungsten, tantalum, niobium, rare earths, gold, and bismuth — the deposits vary according to the region (1).

Forming a new aureole around the depression, other layers have been added, consisting essentially of schisto-calcareous deposits covered by schistous sandstone deposits. They are

(1) In Part 4, see the chapter entitled « Basic Industries » for the distribution of the Congo's mineral deposits.



divided into several groups; the most important one — in Katanga — includes the Kundelungu system and that of Roan. The Roan system reveals abundant mineralization in copper and allied products: cobalt, uranium, zinc, lead, silver. A large part of the Congo's wealth and prosperity is due to this mineralization. The copper-zinc-lead-silver combination is found also in the Lower Congo.

Such are, very briefly outlined, the leading elements that constitute the foundation mass of the Congo. In the successive upheavals of the earth's crust, this foundation was dislocated and folding occurred time and again; thus mountain chains emerged while stratifications intermingled in a complicated network. Some 600 million years ago, the great movements of the earth's crust subsided. Then came a period of transition that lasted some 400 million years during which hardly any new deposits were formed; the foundation mass was leveled — its mountain chains being worn down as a result of atmospheric action — and the Congo took on the appearance of an immense peneplain.

## The Upper Crust.

The sedimentation of the terrains that cover the Congolese foundation mass began some 200 million years ago.

The oldest of these terrains were formed in the depressions to the east and south of the present central basin; they include notably the coal beds of Katanga. Later, in the lacustrine expanses spreading over the leveled foundation mass, other terrains were deposited; they cover the entire bottom of the Congo basin, part of its sides and of its edge. The Lubilash sandstone and the bituminous schists of the Lomani and the Lualaba are found there, as well as — in certain spots — diamantiferous deposits whose original beds were in volcanic rocks.

Finally, a series of varied layers piled up during the last geological periods, viz., between the Tertiary and the Quater-

nary. (1) Here several cycles can be distinguished. The first of these, related to the formations existing in southern Africa, has taken the name of the «Kalahari System». Erosions of every kind have brought about these Kalaharian terrains which present two characteristic aspects: sometimes they are accumulations of deposits in the depressions, and sometimes terraced morphological plateaus that have emerged in the course of ages, the latter being found chiefly in the South of the country. The cycles of layers that followed — often called the «Busira strata», cover up deposits that started to accumulate at least a million years ago (viz., at the end of the Tertiary or the beginning of the Quaternary); they occur in the deepest hollow of the central basin. These last sedimentary deposits, whose formation has been going on down to the present time, are not rich in minerals; most noticeable is a progressive concentration of gold, tin, diamonds, etc.

This outline must be supplemented by the mention of special formations along the seacoast and in the vicinity of the great lakes. Here are found certain specific deposits; on the coast they contain notably bituminous impregnations and phosphates.

## B. The Relief.

This geological history as sketched here in its broad outlines explains at one and the same time the aspect of the Congo's relief and of its hydrographic basin.

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(1) It was during the Quaternary, at a time when tellurian dislocations of slight amplitude created the central depression, that the most ancient of the prehistoric cultures of humanity — the pebble culture — appeared. It was born in Africa, and traces of its existence have been found in the Congo. (See the chapter devoted to prehistoric times in the Congo.)



This relief, such as it appears at the present time, dates from the geological period during which the upper crust was formed. At the beginning of this period, not only had the network of the original mountain chains been leveled down and replaced by a vast peneplain, but the foundation mass itself had become thoroughly consolidated; consequently, from this time on, it opposed a stronger resistance to deformations — both faulting and folding — and reacted by long undulating movements and, in certain cases, by gigantic fractures in the upper crust.

The undulations have given rise to the vast central depression and to the mountainous rim that surrounds it. The basin of the Congo has an average altitude of 1,300 feet (1,100 at its lowest points — Lake Tumba and Lake Leopold II). It is made up of plains and terraced plateaus extending to the peripheral rim; the latter consists of more or less dislocated plateaus — whose height averages a thousand feet in the North and in the Lower Congo — brought about by an upheaval of the Congo's ancient foundation. These plateaus keep rising progressively as they approach Katanga where they form several masses that reach a height of from 5,500 to 6,000 feet in the Kundelungu and Kibara Mountains, and 6,500 in the Marungu Mountains.

This vast undulatory movement was accompanied by still another phenomenon: the longitudinal fracture of the rim which resulted in a gigantic crevasse along the entire eastern frontier. This crevasse is part of a vast system of fractures extending from Mozambique to the Middle East where the Dead Sea is the most remote example. This phenomenon is of such a nature that it is still the subject of scientific discussions. It seems due to a sudden slackening of the forces that had caused the formation of the peripheral rim; when these forces ceased their action, the rim split vertically, and the result was a deep crevasse which — in the Congo — measures 875 miles in length and from 25 to 30 in width, while its depth varies considerably but is not yet well known. In this depression, the great lakes came into existence: Albert, Edward, Kivu, Tanganyika. Lake Tanganyika covers an area of 13,500 square miles and has a maximum depth of 4,800 feet; it is the deepest in the world after Lake Baikal. On both sides of this huge crevasse, the edges of the broken rim —

in a complete dislocation of the strata of the fundamental mass — have risen up and have formed mountain masses. The largest of these is Ruwenzori, a plateau rising above the neighboring regions by 6,500 to 13,000 feet; its highest point is Mount Marguerite, whose altitude is 16,800 feet.

In this fractured area there are volcanic formations, some extinct — such as the Kahuzi Mountain in Kivu — others partially active such as the Virunga chain which bars the crevasse for a distance of 50 miles; at present, the active volcanoes in this chain are: Nyiragongo and Nyamuragira, the latter having a crater which measures 6,500 feet across. This entire region is characterized by frequent earthquakes; it is rich in hot springs which might some day be of value from an economic point of view.

### C. The Waters.

Bound up as it is with the structure of the country's relief and the great geological upheavals, the physiognomy of the Congolese hydrographic network is very complex in spite of an apparent simplicity. The history of Congolese waters is a record of their struggle to escape from closed basins, to link separated basins, and to find an outlet to the sea.

Aside from a little coastal river, the Shiloango, and the basins of Lakes Albert and Edward which are linked with the Nile River System, all the waters of the country now empty into the Atlantic Ocean by way of the Congo River. However, this convergence toward a common point was achieved only step by step. It is difficult to understand the character of the Congolese basin as it is today if one does not know its history. In fact, it has been formed by the junction of three basins: one consisted of a coastal river; another was a closed basin around and about the central depression; the third was the basin of the Upper Lualaba, which at that time was separated from the Congo of



today by a high ridge extending from Dilolo to Lubefu where it joined the Congo-Nile ridge. It is believed that the basin of the Upper Lualaba was not originally linked with the Congo but with the Nile, by means of various extensions in the direction of the great eastern crevasse. At some unknown time in the distant past, the network of the Upper Lualaba was drained by the Lower Lualaba and thus became linked with the basin of the Congo River; the spot where the drainage occurred is marked by the rapids known as the Gates of Hell, near Kongolo.

As for the network proceeding from the central depression, its history is more eventful. At first the equatorial waters flowed toward Lake Chad, but during the Tertiary, when the undulation that created the central depression and its peripheral rim took place, the ridge that separates today the Congolese from the Chad basin came into existence. Thus a new closed basin was created; it included a great lake — centrally located and with no outlet to the sea — fed by various rivers. One of them was destined to play an important part; it flowed from the Mayumbe Ridge towards the equator line by way of the present Leopoldville-Bolobo channel. Probably a million years ago, a double phenomenon took place which was to reverse the course of this river and give the waters of the central depression access to the sea. On the one hand, at the spot known today as Stanley Pool, a geological break occurred, and subsequently the river was drawn to it; thus began the drainage of the central depression's waters. On the other hand, the coastal river previously mentioned receded upstream in accordance with a process well-known in hydrology. Its source burrowed its way underground until it met the source of the great affluent of the central depression; this affluent drained the waters of the coastal river, thus linking the enormous equatorial basin with the Atlantic Ocean.

Farther to the East, Lake Moëro found an outlet by means of the Luvua, while Lake Tanganyika forced its way toward the Lualaba via the Lukuga River, draining the waters of the Kivu and part of the ancient southern basin of Lake Victoria-Nyanza, thus increasing the flow of the Congo River. The latter, today some 3,000 miles in length, has an average flow of 40,000 cubic meters a second; it digs a deep submarine valley and its power

is such that some 10 miles away from the shore its current can still be felt; furthermore, for nearly 50 miles the surface waters of the ocean remain fresh, and for a distance of over 300 miles the sea is colored by the detrital material the river carries with it.

It can readily be understood that such a mass of water, carrying with it a fanlike group of rivers which spread over an area of nearly 1,500,000 square miles, was able, by means of erosion, to force its way through the hardest rocks. The passage it literally cut out for itself through rock between Leopoldville and Matadi is the most striking example of its power. There the river, which at Stanley Pool measures as much as 18 miles in width, narrows down suddenly and flows through passes which sometimes do not exceed 1,650 feet in width. In the 220 mile stretch that separates the capital from the seaport, the river rushes swirling down the long stairway-like slope that it has carved out in the rocks and its level drops about 850 feet in a succession of some 30 falls and rapids. It is in this region that the site of Inga is located, a site which offers resources of energy unique in the world.

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The various phases in the history of the Congolese waters explain the convergence of the rivers toward a single outlet — a phenomenon which often gives them the form of a curve. The ensemble constituted by the rocky plateaus surrounding the central depression explains also the great number of rapids and falls that occur in the rivers. In the entire hydrographical basin of the Congo, the process of erosion appears to be still in full swing, and often the waters seem to be seeking more stable beds. Furthermore, throughout its entire course and according to the terrain it encounters, the Congo River either spreads itself out in depressions and level regions or narrows down to squeeze through passes where navigation is impossible. This behavior, characteristic of a young river, is in some ways a handicap; but on the other hand, the Congo River offers long navigable stretches which total some 1,700 miles, one of them — between Leopoldville and Stanleyville — measuring as much as 1,100. Besides, it benefits

by the great regularity of its flow, which is an asset to navigation; indeed, by the very fact that it is situated on both sides of the equator line which it crosses twice, the river has an exceptionally regular flow as a result of a fortunate distribution of rain. The ratio between its minimum and maximum flow — 23,000 to 75,000 cubic meters per second — is 1 to 3 whereas in the case of the Mississippi the ratio is 1 to 20, of the Nile 1 to 48, and of the Meuse 1 to 100.

## D.

### The Soil.

A mixture which is made up of mineral elements resulting from the decomposition of underlying rock, and of humus consisting of microorganisms — living or dead — has been deposited in a thin layer on the geological foundation; this constitutes the Congolese surface soil.

For a long time the luxuriance of the vast forest gave rise to the erroneous belief that this soil is exceptionally fertile. However, such is not the case. In the Congo, rich soil is rare and occurs only in certain regions. It consists of the alluvial deposits found in the central basin or along the main watercourses; of lands regenerated by erosion, such as those in the Mayumbe Ridge, the Lower Congo or the East; and especially of the volcanic lands of Kivu which are periodically rejuvenated by volcanic ashes carried by the wind.

Aside from these few regions, Congolese soil is poor. Since the topsoil forms a very thin layer, it is easily destroyed by the violent action of atmospheric agents — such as water spouts, great heat, squalls, etc. — unless it is protected by sufficient vegetation. What is more, where the protection provided by vegetation disappears — due to forest depletion or fires in savannas — the topsoil is rapidly replaced by laterite formations which sometimes form a hard shell stretching over several miles

without a break and attaining a thickness of as much as 65 feet. These laterite formations result from the destruction, caused by heat, of the organic matter in the soil. This destruction is completed by the washing of basic products (magnesium, lime, silica), while hydroxides of iron or aluminum are formed; these crystallize at the surface and kill every possibility of regeneration of the topsoil.

## E.

### The Climate.

The changes in the soil, the hydrographic system, the distribution of vegetation and of animal species, as well as the living conditions of human beings — all are profoundly influenced by climate. Climate is the very complex resultant of a group of factors such as temperature, atmospheric pressure, wind, rainfall, humidity, and nebulosity, factors which in their turn are influenced by local conditions.

The Congo, bestriding the equator line between 5 degrees north and 13 degrees south latitude, is included in the zone of the tropical climates. These are characterized by an average annual temperature of more than 64 degrees, by monthly averages that never fall below 64 degrees, by a slight annual variation of less than 9 degrees, and by daily variations which, in the regions farthest away from the equator may be very great. The average annual temperature in the Congolese central basin lies between 77 and 79 degrees, and on the periphery, between 75 and 77 degrees. With increasing altitude, it diminishes by 2 degrees for every 590 feet; it becomes fixed between 64 and 68 degrees at a height of about 4,920 feet, between 61 and 63 degrees at 6,560 feet, 52 degrees at 9,840 feet, and 43 degrees at 13,130 feet. The daily variations, on the other hand, are very marked on the periphery; there the nights are cold and, on the plateaus of Katanga, hoar frost is of frequent occurrence during the dry season.



Consequently, the climate of the Congo is determined in general — except for the high mountain peaks of the East — not by annual variations in temperature but by rainfall, the latter being in turn dependent on the apparent movement of the sun between the two tropics. This movement, together with the rainfall resulting from it, can be used as a basis for the following outline: Around the equator lies a zone with an «equatorial climate»; this zone, both warm and humid, has no dry season but is characterized by two maximal periods of rainfall and temperature each year. On either side of this «equatorial climate» zone extends a «tropical climate» zone; the southern one, because of the geographical location of the country, is much more extensive than the northern one. These «tropical climate» zones are subdivided in turn into a «Sudanese climate» zone having two rainy and two dry seasons, and a «Senegalese climate» zone which has only one short rainy season followed by one long dry season; this Senegalese zone is located in the extreme southern part of the country and has a dry season lasting from May to September.

However, this is a highly theoretical outline, since it takes into consideration nothing but atmospheric influences. In reality, the climatic situation is profoundly modified by geographical factors. Thus the unequal distribution of land and sea in relation to the equator line introduces an initial disturbing influence and pushes the «thermal equator» several degrees to the north and, with it, the area of tropical calms. Other modifying factors are: the existence of the great forest which lowers the average temperature by 2 to 4 degrees; the mountain ranges in the East which receive more rainfall than the central depression, and besides prevent the Indian Ocean from making its influence felt in the interior; the Mayumbe Ridge which checks to a great extent the influence of the Atlantic Ocean; the general relief of the country, a factor which makes itself felt all over and brings about a distribution of rainfall within closed areas.

Still other factors help to make the Congolese climate a complicated ensemble of microclimates where dividing lines between the main zones often become blurred and vague. There is local topography, and also variations in atmospheric humidity

— the latter playing an important part in the salubrity of a region. Mention should be made also of the winds, most of them irregular in nature; they are often accidental and the cause of tornadoes in the equatorial zone; elsewhere, in addition to trade winds, others occur which blow from the north or the south according to whether the sun is in the zenith in the southern hemisphere or the northern; there exist also certain high-pressure winds which give rise to anticyclonic areas that turn clockwise in the northern hemisphere and counterclockwise in the southern.

In order to complete this outline of the Congolese climate's chief characteristics, it should be added that the daily insolation is of relatively constant duration, a fact which causes the days and the nights to be approximately equal.

This climate, such as it appears today, has undergone profound changes in the course of ages. Thus the entire Quaternary was marked by long alternating periods of rain and drought. The most recent period of drought dates from some 100,000 years ago; it was of such a nature as to make the forests disappear and cause the Kalahari Desert to invade the country and stretch northward beyond the equator line. In the course of the rainy period that followed, the Congo took on the appearance it has today. But the present climate is far from being stabilized; indeed, it is still in the process of evolution. For some time now the beginnings of a drying up process have been observed in several parts of Africa and, among these, the Congo. Can this drying up be attributed to a strictly atmospheric cause? Is nature showing signs of man's destructive action? Opinions are divided and this situation continues to be a subject for scientific research.

## F. The Flora.

The vegetation covering the Congolese soil can be divided as a whole into forests and savannas. This simple classification covers a great wealth of plants whose nature is determined by the combination of many physical factors.

## The Forest.

The forest itself — which covers approximately half the country — has various aspects to offer that differ according to the nature of the soil and its relief, the temperature and the rainfall. Consequently, it would be inaccurate to speak of « one » Congolese forest; there are numerous types with a great range of characteristics. However, a first examination shows three main categories of forests: those growing on damp or periodically flooded soil, on firm ground, and in the mountains. But within these three main categories, there are numerous subdivisions.

To consider first the forests found on damp ground. In the briny waters of the Congo estuary, there is the mangrove tree with its aerial roots suggestive of the legs of enormous spiders. In the vast depressions grows the swampy forest where the trees have adapted themselves to prevailing conditions by putting forth aerial or stilt-like roots, or by projecting spurs. Along the river bank are peculiar screen-like formations of « heliophile » trees and shrubs. To the west of the central basin can be found the periodically inundated forest; for part of the year, in a strange spellbinding landscape, the trees emerge from vast sheets of water, sometimes many feet in depth. To conclude, mention should be made of the special kind of forest which covers the islands and which is closely related to the preceding type.

The same variety exists in the forests growing on firm ground. The most popular of its many aspects is that of the great dense forest. Growing in the regions where the seasons are not clearly differentiated, it is characterized by its extraordinary density, the size of its trees which may reach a height of some 130 feet, the perennial nature of its foliage, and an apparent monotony due to the fact that blossoming — although colorful and varied — takes place above the green dome. The undergrowth is amazingly luxuriant: trees, shrubs, grasses, lianas, and epiphytic plants. In regions situated on either side of this great forest with its persistent foliage — regions where the dry season

lasts two or three months — there is another type of forest in which three-quarters of the trees lose their foliage as soon as the rains cease.

In the areas where these forests are cut down, plant life slowly reappears provided that the soil is left to rest. This new vegetation, or « secondary » forest, presents aspects that vary according to its stage of development; it is very often characterized by a species of parasol-shaped trees having very tender wood. According to estimates, it takes about a hundred years for forest land whose trees have been cut down to recover its original appearance.

There exist other types of forest growing on firm ground. In some regions can be found average-sized forests where the foliage is leathery and persistent. Elsewhere, beyond the savannas, there are scattered and thinly wooded forest lands with trees not exceeding 65 feet in height; they grow in areas where the dry season lasts from three to six months and during which the trees lose all their leaves.

Climate and environment determine the pattern of growth of all these forests: zones, clusters, strips, rows.

The mountain forests are of an entirely different nature; they are found in the East, especially in the Ruwenzori range. Located below the equator, this region is characterized by very strong rainfall throughout the year and by a temperature which remains constant for any given altitude. Consequently, these various levels of temperature determine the distribution of vegetation. Thus, along the slopes, plant life ranges from the dense equatorial forest to periglacial saxicolous vegetation, by way of half a dozen different species of which the most typical are fern forests at a height of 5,400 to 7,900 feet, bamboo forests at 6,600 to 8,500, giant fern forests at 8,500 to 12,500, and groundsel forests at 12,500 to 15,400.



## The Savanna.

The savanna stretches out on either side of the dense forest ; it is essentially grassland characteristic of the tropical zones where rainfall is comparatively rare and the dry seasons are rather long.

The savanna also presents many aspects. Grasses may be high and thick, or grow in thin clusters sparsely distributed. Shrubs are scattered around and, like the grasses, they vary from place to place : twisted and stunted, they give the plain the appearance of an immense orchard ; sometimes, although mere dwarfed forms, they turn green and bloom again after brush fires, provided as they are with subterranean organs adapted to drought and fire ; elsewhere, clusters of green acacias or palmyra palm trees stand erect like candles on the plain, and baobab trees with thick, smooth trunks emerge from the grassy sea. Often, in the midst of the savanna, appear vestiges of a vanished forest vegetation ; on the other hand, in the very heart of the forests, there are grassy glades — reminiscent of savannas and known as « esobe » — which, seen from the air, brighten up here and there the dark and dense stretches of trees.

How were the savannas formed ? They had their origin in the action of climates which, after the great drying up period of the Kalahari Desert, gave the Congo its present aspect of forests bordered with a variety of savannas. But to this climatic factor the influence of man must be added. In some places he has burned the existing savannas time and again and has transformed them little by little into steppes ; elsewhere he has mercilessly ravaged the forests without giving them a chance to grow again. This destruction of the savannas was especially marked in the North of the country, so much so that the government had to take measures for the protection of the soil. On the other hand, in certain regions of the South, thanks to more rational methods of cultivation on the part of the natives, reforestation is taking place.

## G. The Fauna.

The distribution of the country's flora, determined by the environment and the climate, largely influences the distribution of its fauna, which is of exceptional interest.

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There are innumerable species of invertebrates. The museum of Tervuren possesses no fewer than three million specimens : ocean oysters, river shrimps, butterflies and giant insects, scorpions and poisonous spiders, mosquitoes and tsetse flies — a medley of useful and dangerous species, and of some that are merely pleasant to look at. The Congolese waters offer a great variety of fishes (over a thousand fresh water species have been classified down to the present time) ; they range from the perch and the catfish found in the rivers to the shark and the sawfish of the coastal waters ; from the pike and the tiger fish to the protopteron, that strange survivor from the age of fossils which hibernates during the dry season in the marshes from which the fisherman drags it out with a hoe. The study of Congolese fishes has sometimes had unexpected scientific consequences ; thus it has been proved — through the discovery of certain extinct species — that the Upper Lualaba at one time was part of the Nile basin.

A similar diversity exists among amphibians and reptiles : an abundance of tortoises, lizards, chameleons, varanians. As for crocodiles, they include three species in the Congo : the Nile crocodile which attacks man, the fish-eating crocodile, and finally, the small crocodile indigenous to the forests. Besides, there are innumerable snakes divided into many species adapted to various physical environments : water, land, and tree snakes, and also amphibian and burrowing snakes.



The world of birds is just as varied. Among the most typical are the ox-peckers, white birds that accompany in swarms the cattle which they rid of flies and ticks ; also guinea fowls, parrots, hawks, crowned cranes, the Congolese peacock, etc. In all, more than 1,200 species have been classified.

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Among all this fauna, the mammals are certainly the most interesting groups, as much for their diversity as for the exuberance of certain forms and the survival among them of fossil vestiges such as the okapi or the daman. Here too, zones of vegetation have conditioned animal life, and it has been observed that, according to the environment in which they were placed, species have progressively adapted themselves either to the soil, or the branches of trees, or the water. In this process of adaptation, the large rivers have constituted barriers and thus, by strengthening the element of isolation, have contributed to diversification. It is also noteworthy that the fauna is richer on the right bank of the Congo River. But the greatest cause of differentiation is the distribution of animal life in the forests and the savannas.

The savanna is above all the habitat of the larger carnivora — the lion, the leopard, the hyena, the jackal ; and also the larger herbivorous mammals — the black buffalo and the tall antelope. The monkeys found there are often of the genus *cynocephalus*. Certain species of mammals are confined to definite regions : the zebras in the grassy plains of Katanga, the rare white rhinoceros in the « reservation » of the Garamba National Park, the giraffe in the bushy savannas of northern Uélé.

In the forest, animal life is concentrated especially in the open spaces, and along the edges and the watercourses. It varies in kind not only according to the region, but also according to the specific location in the forest : the ground, the borders, the glades, the undergrowth, the hollow trunks, the epiphytes, the various heights of the treetops are all habitats of different species

of fauna. The forest is the favorite dwelling place of all sorts of monkeys. Among these, the anthropoid apes are the most picturesque group : there are two sorts of chimpanzees separated by the river, a cave-dwelling chimpanzee to the north and the east of the river, and a midget chimpanzee between the Kasai River and the left bank of the Congo ; also two sorts of gorillas, the forest gorilla in the Mayumbe Ridge, and the mountain gorilla of which three varieties are found in the East of the country. One of the most unusual mammals in the Congolese forest is the okapi. It was not discovered until the beginning of the twentieth century, and the only region in the world where it is known to exist is the forest zone of Uélé and of Aruwimi Ituri, in the Northeast of the Congo ; it is a giraffe-like animal, shy and nocturnal, a vestige of the Tertiary. Other inhabitants of the forest are : antelopes — generally smaller than the species found in the savanna ; and various carnivorous animals and red buffalos that can be classified in several types.

Elephants are found in both the savanna and the forest, but the forest type is smaller and darker ; in certain forests, especially in Uélé in northern Kasai, there is a midget elephant whose weight is only half that of the ordinary African elephant.

Rodents such as rats and squirrels ; carnivora such as wildcats and polecats ; swine such as wart-hogs in the savannas and river hogs in woodland strips ; cave bats and forest bats, orycteropes, shrewmice, and insect-eating hedgehogs — all these, together with a host of other varieties, complete this brief outline. However, mention must also be made of the pangolin, which feeds on termites and ants that it drags out of their nests by means of its long sticky tongue, after tearing the nests to pieces with its claws ; and another queer animal, the lava rat, a kind of daman which has adapted itself to living conditions in the volcanic fields of Kivu.

Rivers and lakes also harbor mammals which are adapted to the special conditions prevailing in such a habitat. Among these is the amphibious hippopotamus whose weight may reach two tons and whose sensory organs have undergone curious periscopal changes. Another aquatic animal is the manatee, an

old terrestrial mammal whose structure has been profoundly modified by its environment ; in this process of adaptation, the body has been lengthened like a spindle, the hind limbs have disappeared, the forelimbs have been transformed into flippers, and the tail into a kind of paddle. The manatee belongs to the group known as the sirenians ; it is found at the mouth of the river and in the vicinity of certain waterfalls in the interior ; its existence has given rise to numerous African legends which are counterparts of tales known in the western world, tales born of the belief in sirens immortalized by Homer.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PEOPLE'S CONTRIBUTION



## SUMMARY

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## 1.

### **The Traditional Congoles Community.**

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It was not until the end of the 19th century that a systematic European penetration extending to the entire territory that makes up the present day Congo was organized.

Started barely a few decades ago, this penetration has profoundly changed the nature of both the Congo and its people, and the transformation process is continuing at an ever-accelerating pace. This evolution gravitates between two poles : one is the new European element representative of the western world ; the other, based on custom, is the ancient traditional way of life. It is absolutely necessary to understand these ancient traditions, because even among the natives who have deliberately rejected their authority, they still determine certain reflexes, attitudes, concepts, and ideas about the world. They are in fact the tree upon which occidental civilization has been grafted. A new society is bound to result from this operation, but for the present it is still in the making.

What was the Congolese community like in the past ?

Its basic and essential unit, much more essential than the married couple, was the clan. A living unit, at one and the same time religious, social, and economic, the clan included all the descendants of a common ancestor, not only the living, but the dead and the generations yet unborn. Within the confines of the clan, marriage was forbidden, being looked upon as incestuous. It was permitted only between different clans, and the children born of these unions belonged, not to the couple as such, but to the father's clan or to the mother's according to the region. Marriage involved the payment of a dowry to the wife's clan, a dowry representing both a guarantee and an indemnity for the loss suffered by the clan in giving up one of its productive elements. In this traditional community, polygamy was customary ; however, it did not generally take the form of a harem — except in the case of chieftains — but of a small « household » polygamy limited to a few wives.

Clannish units with common ancestral ties tended to group themselves in order to form the embryo of a social organization within the bosom of a larger agglomeration such as the tribe. In certain places federations were constituted, such as that of the Bakubas, or kingdoms such as that of Kongo, or military empires like that of the Lundas ; in these cases a centralized power appeared that was based on a feudal organization. Within these political systems numerous associations were created : handicraft corporations, brotherhoods of initiates, and age groups — all of which played an important part. Finally, the traditional community included various social classes, essentially free men and serfs, the latter being subjected to domestic slavery. As for ownership of property, it had no individual character ; land was the collective property of the clan, that unit which comprised the living, the dead, and future generations. The economy was on a mere subsistence basis : food growing, hunting, fishing, and handicrafts, all of which had the limited aim of assuring the survival of the social group ; any commerce was limited to rudimentary barter. Religion consisted of private worship of God and public worship of ancestors, but it was covered up with numerous superstitious beliefs which had come to debase its

original source ; human sacrifices — especially those of household slaves — were not rare. The isolation in which the tribes lived had favored the multiplication of dialects. While the arts, especially sculpture, were in full bloom, literature on the other hand had not gone beyond the oral stage ; and aside from a few ideographical representations, writing was unknown.

This ancient population, sparse and scattered over an immense and hostile area of forest lands and savannas — to this day there are not more than fourteen inhabitants per square mile — has nevertheless changed the face of the country far more than is apparent at first sight. Continually pulling up stakes to establish their temporary villages elsewhere, and constantly seeking fresh ground for planting their crops, these people moved across the country stripping the soil of its vegetation. Each year, they cut down the trees on the piece of land they needed and set fire to it, using the burned debris as fertilizer. The following year, once the harvest had been gathered, this first field was abandoned and given a long period of rest while a new portion of fertile soil was sought out and cleared in its turn. Such methods required enormous stretches of land, stretches which covered — in view of the duration of the fallow period — at least fifteen times the area actually cultivated.

It is therefore understandable that these tribes, moving on as they did century after century in search of richer lands, scarred the soil with fires and exhausted it mercilessly, leaving traces which may not be apparent to the layman but are significant for the knowing observer. Thus, numerous secondary forests have grown on the sites of ancient fields, and savannas have encroached on forests. The far-reaching consequences of this mark left on the country are obvious when one sees how few primary forests have remained intact. Indeed, for centuries clans and tribes cut across each other's migration trails and covered the country with a network of ancient fields, traces of which are still visible. The arrival of the Europeans was destined to stop this migratory movement and bring a new way of life to the country.



## 2. The Congolese Community of Today.

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Today the Congo's population is of an essentially transitional nature characterized by a constant interreaction of the two elements composing it : the European and the African. Between these two groups — white and black — no class of half-breeds has sprung up as in the case of other countries. The reason is simple : there has never been any large-scale European immigration in the Congo ; on the whole, only those whose presence was indispensable have gone there, and furthermore, the bachelors of the earlier years have been gradually replaced by European families that have become more and more numerous.

The European group — a small minority — constitutes above all a fundamental cadre, an indispensable frame. It consists of at least 100,000 people of whom four-fifths are Belgians ; the Portuguese, Greeks, and Italians taken together make up more than half the foreign element and devote themselves especially to commerce (1).

The African element consists of a mass of over 13,000,000 people. The great majority of them are Bantus ; on the northern frontier there are Sudanese tribes, and in the eastern regions, Hamitic and Nilotic tribes. As for the Pygmies, the survivors of the first occupants of the land — who were driven back by the Bantu invaders — they represent barely 1.5 % of the population and in many areas their type is changing because of cross-breeding with the neighboring tribes.

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What have been the consequences of this confrontation on the same soil of two human groups whose manners and customs, civilization, and standard of living differed so greatly, one of them being still at the stage of semi-nomadism, and the other at the height of its civilization and in full mastery of its techniques ?

The European element itself was the first to be affected by this state of things, and it has undergone striking transformations. To begin with, the physical environment imposed a new way of life on the Europeans : housing, climate, hygiene, diet, recreation — everything here was different from what they had known in Europe. The tasks entrusted to most of them were also completely new : the office worker turned to building trading-stations, the

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(1) The Asiatic element — 1.5 % of the European group — is negligible. It is composed chiefly of Pakistanis, Hindus, and Arabs.

small farmer grew new types of crops, the lawyer laid down roads ; but at the same time, from the small businessman to the governor general, all were called upon to assume in one way or another — sometimes even without being aware of it — duties involving authority, and tasks of an educational nature. A new psychology was created, and thus a special form of European society adapted to African conditions came into being. However, on the whole the European group has not taken root in the Congo ; with the exception of the colonists who have settled down there permanently, and the missionaries, most of the Europeans are career men and women who remain there from fifteen to thirty years on the average.

Nevertheless, the African element has been much more profoundly affected by the new state of things. Contact with the European minority has literally shaken it out of the lethargy into which the old clannish civilization had plunged it. It awakened, and a transformation took place in its demographical structure and its way of life. But, whereas the European group as a whole underwent a change that was relatively superficial, the African population was split in two ; this cleavage soon divided the natives into two categories : one, still clinging to the rural environment, is coming into contact with new ideas only very gradually ; the other, lured by the large industrial and urban centers, has been uprooted and has entered the orbit of modern life much more rapidly.

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This cleavage in the native masses had its first effects on the demographical structure of the Congo. Originally, the rural population was very unequally distributed : even today one-fifth is scattered through half the country — about three inhabitants per square mile ; the other four-fifths are concentrated in nuclei that give some areas an average population density ranging from approximately thirty to sixty per square mile. But this distribution was far from coinciding with the regions that the Europeans

could develop. On the contrary, often the leading enterprises had to be set up in areas that were almost uninhabited, and the workers had to be recruited in distant regions. Soon the new centers became so many lodestones for the country people, and the usual exodus began. As of today, almost a quarter of the native population has abandoned its rural habitat and has flocked to the cities.

Such a situation obviously raises the question of equilibrium between the two fractions of the native population. It seems that in many localities, the limits beyond which this equilibrium will be in jeopardy have been or are on the point of being reached. But it also seems that this migratory phenomenon is in the process of slowing down. Indeed, for several years, the hiring of workers has been proceeding at a slower rate, thanks to progress in mechanization, to more efficient management, and also to the rise in salaries which necessitates cutting down the labor force ; furthermore, a policy of stability in the rural areas has been launched by the creation of the « paysannats » which are at one and the same time agricultural and social groups.

These migrations have given rise to the problems common to all new countries ; while in the rural centers the female population exceeded the male, in the new centers the women were too few in proportion to the men. This lack of balance, which was bound to diminish, does not seem to have affected the general increase in population. What is the extent of this increase — if any ? And is the native population actually growing or decreasing ? It is not possible to know with any degree of certainty — for lack of reliable means of investigation — what the population of the Congo was at the end of the 19th century. It seems however that it was at best stationary, and perhaps even diminishing as a result of the slave traffic. It appears also that the population, badly prepared for new ways of life, has reacted at certain times and in certain places by a loss of vitality. At the time of the first shake-up of the native masses brought about by the introduction of industry, they were attacked by epidemics that found them defenceless ; in certain tribes the birthrate fell for reasons that are still unknown, while others developed and proliferated briskly. It seems therefore that civilization and its after-effects



are not the only factor at work here, and that variations in the vitality of different tribes have actually played a more important part. But, however that may be, accurate figures on the demographical situation in the Congo, which have been available for several years, show that on the whole the population is now increasing. Made up above all of young elements, it is growing at the annual rate of 1 % ; it seems that this rate of increase is showing a tendency to accelerate, which permits the hope that the population will number at least 15 million Africans within some fifteen years. The results achieved must be attributed chiefly to the struggle against infant mortality and to a general improvement in hygiene ; the progress has been most striking in certain urban centers.

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In the presence of western civilization, what is the social behavior of the two fractions — rural and extra-rural — that have been created within the native population ?

Any attempt to describe this reaction is plainly a very difficult task, since the phenomenon in question is in constant evolution, and its limits are vague and changing; such factors as milieu, origin, education, and the human element contribute to its extreme variability.

Indeed, a general evolution is noticeable in the country, an evolution which operates on many different levels. It is obviously more rapid and more apparent in the urban centers, where the proximity of European social life serves as an example, and where symbiosis is already under way ; it must not be forgotten that more than half the Europeans are concentrated in the eight leading cities of the Congo.

However, the rural zones have been affected by modernization to a far greater extent than appears at first sight. Doubtless, in conformity with the Belgian policy in the Congo,

the authority of the chieftains and the native institutions have been upheld whenever possible. Doubtless, the traditional concepts will govern a large part of both community and individual life, but some of them have already crumbled to ruin, and a large number of the natives have now found themselves. Many institutions have been officially blotted out or shaken ; certain customs — such as ritual murder or other barbarous practices — have been under direct attack for a long time, while others — such as household slavery and polygamy — have been or are in the process of being stifled, after having lost all legal recognition. As for the institutions still surviving, they have had to withstand an insidious assault by new ideas ; the customs concerned, even if they still prevail, have evolved and, with them, the institutions that they inspire. Furthermore, the diffusion of education — which today reaches over a million children, the conversion to Christianity of more than half the population, the mingling all over the country of people who until recently had lived within the narrow confines of their village or their tribe — all these factors have introduced new ideas that have sometimes caused ancient structures to break down. The return of former city dwellers to their villages has also been an active ferment ; they have disclosed to the young people a new approach to life and have aroused in them the will to free themselves from the domination of their elders. Under these influences, the cloak of clannish constraint has been lifted, and everywhere today, in the rural areas as well as in the cities, the Congolese is beginning to find himself and to feel that he wishes to be a free individual.

Industrialization, now in full swing, is promoting this evolution. For the last few years the entire country has been concerning itself more and more with manufacturing industries in addition to its basic industries, while in the rural areas a market economy has replaced the old subsistence economy. This evolution is far from having reached its goal ; indeed, the entire program planned for the next years aims at developing the productivity of the natives, expanding the home market and, consequently, bringing about a new improvement in the standard of living.

At the same time new social classes have come into existence.

The ancient traditional community consisted almost entirely of semi-nomad plowmen ; today, one man out of two — on the average — is a wage-earner, and more than 150,000 farmers constitute the first generation of Congolese who have rallied to the intensive and rational agricultural methods applied by the native farming developments ; throughout the country, new classes of society made up of independent businessmen and craftsmen are appearing, and they will contribute their share to the strengthening of the community of tomorrow.

But another and much more important transformation is the interpenetration which has begun to take place between the two groups, white and black. For a long time this interpenetration was difficult to bring about, on account of the immense differences in the ways of life and the background of the two elements ; because of those differences, all the managerial activities were entrusted to the Europeans. Today new Congolese social strata are coming to the fore ; equipped with sufficient intellectual training, they are capable of relieving the European technicians and of participating with them in the organization of a great mass of people whose evolution is now in full swing. It is certain that this interpenetration, as it becomes generalized, will give the country the social structure advocated by the Belgian colonial policy ; the latter, rejecting all quibbling, aims at building a Belgo-Congolese community based on association and free from all racial discrimination.

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The primitive Congo that Stanley came in contact with is a thing of the past ; the old face is fading away and new features, more dynamic, clear-cut, and varied have given it a new look. In the forests, oil refineries are busy, and on the high plateaus of Katanga the silhouettes of slag heaps and blast furnaces stand out ; on all sides, vast plantations stretch out. Young cities project their high buildings against the sky. Leopoldville, the capital, which had 22,000 inhabitants in 1933, now boasts of

more than 350,000. The Congo has shaken off its prolonged lethargy, and now a new country emerges and asserts its vitality. Like all the new nations of the 20th century, it is still seeking its philosophy of life, torn as it is between the traditional subservience to the old clannish discipline and the call of individualism, between the old stereotyped forms and the forward outlook of social progress. Nearly half its population is under the age of fifteen, and this fact constitutes its brightest hope for the future.

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Note. The picture presented in this chapter of the social situation in the Congo and of its evolution constitutes only a brief introductory sketch. The chapters that make up the rest of this book treat each topic individually.



**PART II**

**A HISTORY  
OF THE CONGO**

CHAPTER I  
**PREHISTORIC  
TIMES**



## SUMMARY

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## 1.

### Prehistoric Times in Europe.

The Prehistoric Age in the Congo, which is a part of all we know about Africa, must be assigned to its proper place within the perspective of the Prehistoric Age in Europe ; thus it takes on a comparative significance that constitutes its real importance.

It was not until the past century, and in Europe, that humanity became aware of its real origins and came to realize that the oldest peoples mentioned in history had been preceded, in the course of a very long past, by a series of primitive human types linking present-day man to simian ancestors.

At that time were developed the converging disciplines of geology, climatology, the general paleontology of the Quaternary, human paleontology, and prehistory. France, Belgium, and Great Britain were responsible for the first scientific syntheses in these fields. Such syntheses have established the facts that primitive

man had gradually progressed, both physically and mentally, and that this evolution had been accompanied by a series of different stone civilizations; these civilizations won greater and greater victories over a hostile and ever-changing environment marked by several Ice Ages with interglacial epochs (warm intervals) between them. Paleontology, for its part, has proved that these primitive men had been the contemporaries of species of animals that have since disappeared from the European scene: the elephant, the hippopotamus, the lion, etc.

The French, English, and Belgian studies in these new scientific fields show that the first chronological succession of prehistoric human cultures has been traced in Western Europe.

The human cultures of prehistoric times comprise four great successive periods which are:

- Paleolithic Age or Early Stone Age
- the Mesolithic Age or Middle Stone Age
- the Neolithic Age or Late Stone Age
- the Age of Metals.

The Paleolithic Age in its turn comprises three successive periods:

- Lower Paleolithic
- Middle Paleolithic
- Upper Paleolithic.

Lower Paleolithic lasted a long time. It was characterized by two stages in the production of stone implements; the first stage was marked by hand axes, also known as fist-hatchets, while the second was marked by flint or flake tools and weapons. The first stage was subdivided into Abbevillian or Chellean, and Acheulian; the second, into Clactonian and Levalloisian.

Middle Paleolithic continues the Levalloisian phase and includes besides the Mousterian Phase.

During the upper Paleolithic period, the inventive spirit of

man at last expresses itself freely. He not only used stone and bones for his implements, but he created an art; this was expressed at first in his personal belongings, and then on the walls of grottos that are famous today. The phases of this Paleolithic period are Aurignacian, Perigordian, Solutrean, and Magdalenian.

The Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age is very important in the prehistory of Western Europe. Indeed, whereas during the Paleolithic Age, humanity knew only the precarious existence of hunters, during the Mesolithic Age, which appears after the last Ice Age, men feel new needs: they take to food gathering and begin to domesticate animals.

The Neolithic Age loomed up some thousands of years ago; it was a period of tremendous progress in civilization. The techniques of agriculture, pottery, etc. made their appearance. This period of major discoveries already foreshadows modern times.

As for the Age of Metals, it is generally placed in the proto-historic period, which precedes the times of written records but is often borne out by oral traditions and legends that were later recorded.



## 2.

### Prehistoric Times in Africa.

Such are the traditional divisions of European prehistory. The knowledge already acquired was destined to be suddenly enriched by later discoveries made in Asia and Africa, discoveries that in their turn threw a new light on the origins of humanity.

First of all, in Southeast Asia the remains of a primitive human type, the Pithecanthropus, were discovered; and then those of another, the sinanthropus, closely related to the first.

The prehistoric exploration of Africa began rather late, but it had sensational results. Indeed, it was destined to prove not only that Africa was one of the cradles of humanity, but that it had known a human type even before the Pithecanthropus: the Australopithecus. Before the other parts of the world, Africa had thus seen the first men work stone in a manner which was definitely more primitive than European Paleolithic. This phase, which was characterized by the rudimentary shaping of pebbles, was called pebble culture.

Furthermore, later discoveries have shown Africa to be the principal center of the evolution of fossil Hominians some 25 million years ago, viz., in the middle of the third Ice Age. Later, when the northern regions of Europe and Asia were plunged into glacial and periglacial periods that were unfavorable to humanity, Africa knew warm and damp climates, a fauna rich in mammals, and it was inhabited continuously by successive forms of primitive humanity.

As a matter of fact, Africa is still today the only part of the Old World where remains can be found representing all the morphological stages through which humanity has passed in its slow evolution from a purely animal state: the Australopithecus stage, the Pithecanthropus stage, the Neanderthalian stage, and finally the present stage of Homo Sapiens. What is more, the stone implements which literally pave vast regions of the African continent make it possible to follow the successive steps in the technical progress of the human mind.

What are the conclusions to be drawn from these discoveries in Africa?

Today we are in a position to affirm that Africa witnessed the first stage in the existence of primitive humanity: the stage of the Australopithecus. This must have happened in the woodlands and the grassy savannahs that border on the thick forests of Central Africa.

The Australopithecus was still very close to primitive animality, but he already belonged to the morphological type of man by his erect stature and his dentition. He already had the inventive spirit of man. Discoveries made in the grottos of the Transvaal have shown that this human type, even before the Stone Age, had made use of bones to shape implements; he systematically gathered and used the roughest and sharpest cranial and post-cranial bones of animals he had killed in hunting. The Australopithecus is probably responsible for the later discovery of stone-cutting and the fashioning of pebbles into instruments for cutting,

scraping, splitting, etc. These instruments made possible the production of wooden weapons and tools that have since disappeared.

This type of primitive African probably lived during the entire first half of the fourth Ice Age, viz., for a period of about 500,000 years.

The Pithecanthropus, who originated in Asia, succeeded him. He dominated the face of the Old World for some 300,000 years. Recent discoveries made in Northern Africa have shown that this Pithecanthropus was the author of the fist-hatchets which characterized Europe during the earliest part of the Paleolithic Age.

An evolution took place among the Pithecanthropi toward the end of their period of domination and produced two divergent tendencies : one led to the Neanderthals, who remained very primitive in appearance, and the other to Homo Sapiens, the type to which all human beings belong today. The Neanderthals were dominant for some 100,000 years and produced cultures of the advanced Mousterian or Levalloisian type. About 80,000 years ago, they were replaced by Homo Sapiens, the creator of the world of today with its richness and variety in all the things of the mind.

### 3.

## Prehistoric Times in the Congo.

What has been the part played by the Congo in this evolution of primitive humanity ?

As early as 1884, in the Lower Congo, the first indications of the existence of a stone age were discovered. However, it was not until the second quarter of the present century that systematic studies were made on the prehistory of the entire Congo region. These studies, still very incomplete, nevertheless make it possible to bring out the characteristics peculiar to the Congo and fit them into the information we possess about Africa as a whole.

The prehistory of the Congo region, like that of the rest of Africa, began with the crudely cut pebbles of the pebble culture period, the most ancient of all the stone age civilizations, that of the Australopithecus. All the phases of pebble culture discovered in Uganda and in South Africa have also been found in the Belgian Congo ; however, in the Congo they show characteristics peculiar to the land of forests. As of today, cut and shaped pebbles have been discovered in Katanga and Upper Kasai, but it is probable that they exist all along the periphery of the Congolese basin. These finds plainly indicate that the Australopithecus formerly lived in the Belgian Congo, but as yet no fossil remains have been unearthed.



On the other hand, the Congo is badly represented in the Abbevillian, Acheulian, and Clactonian types, except in their last phases. The climate is responsible for this fact. Indeed, during the long period that witnessed the appearance and evolution of these cultures, Africa was drenched by heavy rainfall. At that time, the Pithecanthropi found, in these regions which are deserts today, hunting grounds rich in a variety of animals. Central Africa had become extremely damp and was covered with a dense and unhealthy forest that made it unfit for human habitation. However, at the end of this long wet period, a drying-up process began that forced back the great forest to the heart of the central basin of the Congo. Deposits dating from that time, found in the periphery of this basin, bear witness to the arrival of a prehistoric man of a new type. Such deposits have been discovered in Katanga and upper Kasai; they give evidence of a highly developed Acheulian culture and, in Katanga, of a Clactonian type of flint implements.

It should be noted that in the Old World, wherever Acheulian cultures appear, they begin by being all similar, but in their final phase seem brusquely to break apart and become diversified. This diversification may be due to several factors such as profound climatic changes and also the appearance, among the last Pithecanthropi of Pre-Neanderthalian and Pre-Homo Sapiens types.

The Congolese basin also witnessed this diversification of Acheulian cultures of the Paleolithic Age in their final phase.

In the highly developed Acheulian culture of Katanga, which came at the end of the wet period, wooden tools had appeared; these were destined soon to characterize the successive phases of Congolese prehistoric culture.

The first of these to appear was the Sangoan, which resulted from a diversification of the Acheulian. The Sangoan is a forest culture characterized by the appearance of large picks for stripping the bark off trees, chisels, and gouges for working wood. But the traces of this culture were quickly buried under

thick layers of red sand blown by the wind: in fact, some 100,000 years ago, the entire Congo basin was transformed for an uncertain period of time into a vast desert probably similar to the Kalahari Desert.

Later, when more favorable climates returned, new phases of cultures appeared which continued the evolution begun earlier. The most striking of these cultures are of the forest type, discovered in the West of the Congo. To the picks, chisels, and gouges of the Sangoan culture, the Lupembian added daggers, spearheads, and arrowheads. At the same time, in the East of the Congo appeared a culture of the Mousterian type better adapted to the nearby steppes, and therefore belonging to the great category of cultures of the steppes discovered in the East and the South of Africa.

This diversification of cultures, which began at the end of the Paleolithic Age, continued during the Congolese Mesolithic Age. At that time, within the sphere of cultures of a forest type, the Lupembian, which in its final phase was enriched by microlithic elements such as arrows with transverse cutting edges, developed into Tshitolean. Among the cultures of the steppes, varied forms appeared: some microlithic, others macrolithic, still others using larger stones.

At the time when the Neolithic Age was about to reach the Congolese basin, the great forest took on first-rate importance. Indeed, the Neolithics, who originated in the Sudanese regions, brought with them new techniques: agriculture, pottery, stone polishing. The forest opposed an almost impassible barrier to their progress. From this time on, it divided the Congo into two zones of civilization. A widespread Neolithic culture extended to the north of the great forest, but it barely manifested its existence toward the south along the Luluaba as far as Maniema and on both sides of the forest. Elsewhere the Mesolithic cultures continued to exist until the arrival, in the course of the Christian era, of the Bantus, who brought with them the making and use of metals.

It was doubtless in the course of the seventh or eighth century of our era that metals began to be used in the Congolese basin. But no precise date can be given as yet ; excavations in the Lower Congo, Kwango, Kivu, and Katanga show that the arrival of the Bantus in the Congo took the form of a series of invasions that gradually pushed back and then destroyed the last remnants of the Stone Age.

But traces of the Stone Age remained for a long time alongside the new techniques. Indeed, the same excavations have shown that, until a recent epoch which ended perhaps two centuries ago, the Bantus continued to use, together with their own tools of metal and clay, the stone implements that they had found on the spot ; however, these implements (flint tools and stone blades) are, as might be expected, of a debased style.

It should be noted that the results of these excavations can in many cases be reconciled with the chronology of oral traditions, such as lists of sovereigns.

The Bantu cultures of the Age of Metals can be, it seems, linked up with all the graphic representations in rock hitherto found both in the Lower Congo and Katanga as well as in the Uele. These graphic representations include engravings, a variety of carved signs and symbols (cupular, pediform, etc.), and also paintings.

## CHAPTER II THE CONGO BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE BELGIANS



## SUMMARY

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## 1.

### Outline of a History of the Congo.

Down to the present time, not only the past but even the recent past of Central Africa have remained shrouded in mystery.

No written chronicle to be found on the spot has perpetuated events, peoples, dynasties. No lasting monument has preserved in stone the memory of dreams, desires, and emotions effaced thousands of years ago. Just a few carvings here and there on the rocks bear witness to the passage of forgotten tribes. Nothing more.

Must we conclude from this that for nearly two thousand years Central Africa, cut off from European progress by the desert and by impassible rivers, saw only unorganized hordes similar to the human herds of prehistoric times? Not at all. This is an erroneous idea; it is still believed in certain circles where people repeat glibly that, until the arrival of the Europeans in the last century, the history of black Africa is one with prehistoric times.

As a matter of fact, the first Europeans who landed in Africa often found communities that were politically organized. Some of them, under the stimulus of the head of a family who transformed

himself into a monarch, had even become kingdoms, such as the kingdom of the Congo near the mouth of the river, founded in the 13th century, or the empire of the Lunda on the frontier of Katanga, created in the 13th century. There are many evidences of the history of these Congolese monarchies. These evidences are of the two kinds: the most numerous are the oral traditions of the tribes — still preserved in part — which have been collected and recorded by investigators, missionaries or territorial officials; the others — rarer but more precious — are the chronicles, especially the travelers' chronicles of the 15th and 16th centuries printed in Europe at the time. The latter thus make the Congo pass from the stage of prehistoric times, based on oral legends and chronology, to that of history properly speaking, which rests on written records.

Has the sum total of all this evidence been used as it could have been? This can be doubted. Certainly essays have been written on such and such a people: the Bakongo, the Bakuba, and the Mongo have been the most favored in this respect. But as yet there is no synthesis which, utilizing all the available documents and adding to them the oral traditions that are still alive but ready to be blotted out in the memories of tomorrow, would finally recount a history of the Congo such as it developed before Stanley traversed the country.

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Such a history might start at the beginning of the second millenium.

Indeed, no precise record has been preserved of what happened during the first millenium of our era.

It seems however that this first millenium witnessed the arrival in the Congo of a succession of peoples of the Bantu type. Were they «proto-Bantu», «semi-Bantu», or «real Bantu»? Discussions on this point are in full swing and no one seems to be getting any nearer to solving the problem. But it appears that these people who, coming in waves from different

points, slowly approached the edges of the inhospitable tropical forests, were not so much conquerors as tribes driven back by invaders. The point where they originally dispersed seems to have been the Northeast of the Congo, doubtless in the Sudanese or the Abyssinian region. What causes precipitated the migration of the Bantus toward the South? Foreign invasions? Or was it above all the spreading of a drought that had its origin in the Sahara Desert?

However that may be, while a gradual flow of peoples skirting the great lakes and the Indian Ocean arrived in South Africa, other tribes, widely dispersed, infiltrating the valleys and the river banks, arrived from all directions and met in the heart of the equatorial forest where little by little they settled down. The paths of these migrations coincide or intersect each other to such an extent that a map of these great movements of tribes seems above all a labyrinth of lines fantastically mingled in a complicated mosaic. Some of these tribes progressed in very strange spirals which are still to a certain extent kept alive in traditions.

These Bantu invasions, successive and intermingled, continued throughout the entire second millenium. They were still going on when, at the close of the 19th century, Europeans occupied the country. It can be said that this arrival of Europeans put an end to the great ethnic migrations of Central Africa. (1)

Of the part played by the Pygmies during this long period little is known. The Bantu traditions however are in agreement in calling them the first occupants, living by hunting and food-gathering, whom they found in different parts of the great forest.

During the past two centuries, newcomers appeared on the northern border of the country: they were the Sudanese and the Nilotic tribes who thus succeeded the Bantus in various peripheral regions.

(1) It must be noted however that these migrations of tribes have today been transformed into human currents born of the industrialization and urbanization of the country.



## 2. The ancient Congolese Monarchies.

In the course of the second millenium another phenomenon appeared, as evidenced by oral traditions and the few chronicles written by ancient European travelers : the stabilization and the political organization of the tribes in strong units. It seems, generally speaking, that once the current of migration had been exhausted and a safe refuge together with a fertile soil had been secured, the Bantu communities soon settled down. Some forms of power were organized and consolidated ; dynasties were born

and succeeded each other. Kingdoms were created that were at times definitely despotic and tyrannical, and at other times bore a close resemblance to feudal Europe ; occasionally they even had certain aspects that revealed democratic aspirations.

Simultaneously, civilizations appeared which were characterized by a body of religious beliefs, social concepts, and artistic manifestations. Was this the birth of new civilizations ? Or a resurgence of ancient elements fused with oriental contributions ? Or was it one of the last stages of a very ancient civilization deteriorating in hostile surroundings ? These are all questions for the expert on Africa. But whatever hypothesis is adopted, it seems clearly proved that the Congo, during the European Middle Ages, was not the « savage » country it has generally been called. Neither was it at the height of human culture. However, a kind of life existed there that had already evolved, although its forms gradually died out under varying circumstances, but evidence that it actually did exist has been preserved.

### A. The Kingdom of the Congo.

As early as the 15th century the kingdom of the Congo — the one concerning which we possess the most ancient and the most numerous documents — entered into relations with Europe and made its appearance in world history.

This kingdom had been founded toward the close of the 13th or the beginning of the 14th century by hunters who had come from the southeast ; a long migration had brought them to the shores of the Atlantic. When the Portuguese discovered the kingdom at the end of the 15th century, it spanned the river, stretching to the north as far as the vicinity of Pointe-Noire and to the south as far as Angola ; to the east it bordered on Kwango.

What was this Congolese kingdom like ?

The very first explorers pointed out that the natives there seemed more civilized than elsewhere. To be sure, writing was unknown, and the country had not been — as were the Negro territories of Bénin and Timbuktoo — in touch with superior civilizations, but the political structure closely resembled the feudal organization of Europe during the Middle Ages. In fact, the king had divided the country into provinces and districts at the head of which he placed delegates chosen by himself and treated as vassals. However, in certain cases there were already popular elections, a kind of democratic counterweight in embryo opposing authoritarianism. Social life was rigid and governed by strict rules. There were rather highly developed techniques: the casting of iron and copper was known; also the art of pottery; and the weaving of cloth so strong that the Portuguese used it as sails for their boats. Certain animals were raised — pigs, sheep, goats, — and also poultry. Moreover, long before the arrival of Europeans, millet, sorgho, bananas, peas, squashes, and yams were grown.

Such was the Congo when its king, Nzinga Ntinu, received the delegates that the King of Portugal sent him in 1484. Keeping these delegates as hostages, he dispatched ambassadors to Lisbon asking for masons, carpenters, agricultural laborers and missionaries — in short all the technicians he needed to help him improve the living conditions of his subjects.

From this time on, regular relations were established between the kingdoms of the Congo and Portugal; relations based, at least at the start, not on conquest or vassalization, but on an alliance. The two kings, on a equal footing of formality, exchanged ambassadors from their first contacts and these diplomatic relations were continued for many years. Indeed, Portugal was aiming, through this alliance, at establishing for her benefit a monopoly of commerce and evangelization.

The kingdom of the Congo reached its apogee in the 16th century. After having been converted to Catholicism and baptized in 1491 old King Nzinga Ntinu had gradually returned

to the paganism of his ancestors but, before dying in 1506, he had designated as his successor his son who had been converted under the name of Don Affonso. The latter at the time was ruling the province of Mbanzasundi, in the present-day Belgian Congo. Once on the throne, he turned out to be a great king. During his reign Europeans, the majority of them Portuguese, arrived in ever-growing numbers. Caravans of missionaries kept following each other, churches were built, wholesale baptisms — sometimes two thousand a day — took place while fetishes were burned. Finally foreign commerce was established and trading posts covered the entire country.

Under Don Affonso the idea of an African Catholic clergy first became a reality. He sent his son Don Henrique to Europe to receive an ecclesiastical training; in 1518, before returning to Africa, the latter was made a bishop.

Soon, under the stimulus of Don Affonso, the kingdom of the Congo entered active international life. He not only maintained diplomatic relations with the Portuguese court on a level of equality, but he maintained diplomatic relations with the Holy See throughout his life. Between 1504 and 1539, he even sent three delegations to Rome to request for himself privileges equal to those granted the King of Portugal. What was more, he did not hesitate to insist on the annexation of the island of São Tomé to his kingdom. This island was at the time a nest of Portuguese pirates.

But the end of his reign was marked by repeated conflicts with the Portuguese. As a matter of fact, the latter had introduced — together with commerce — alcoholism, extortion, and the slave trade. The slave trade soon assumed such proportions that Don Affonso, although he had been one of the first suppliers of slaves, became indignant and threatened to cut off all commerce with the Portuguese. Such reprisals seem to foreshadow the modern methods of the boycott. The King's indignation is understandable: from 1436 on, four thousand to five thousand Negroes were embarked every year as slaves in the Congolese port of Mpinda and sent to Portugal.



The situation kept getting worse, the local traffickers piling abuse on abuse and extending more and more every day their trade in Congolese slaves. Soon they even accused the King of concealing from them gold and silver mines that existed only in their imagination.

To aggravate all this, invasion soon threatened the kingdom: the barbarous Jagas, who like the Huns in Europe were over-running Africa and burning everything in their path, were at the frontiers. The Congo was sacked and its capital destroyed and burned. Don Affonso's successor, Don Alvaro, appealed to the Portuguese for help. In 1580 the latter arrived and restored order. It took them a year and a half to subdue the ferocious Jagas.

After this intervention, the Portuguese abandoned the Congo more and more and turned their attention to Angola which offered them a more favorable field for commercial activity. Faced by such a state of affairs, King Alvaro II in 1590 undertook a struggle against the Portuguese. Making use of European rivalries, he tried to put his kingdom under the tutelage of the Holy See and then encouraged the arrival in the Congo of the Dutch, who were beginning at that time to acquire a foothold in Africa.

This balancing feat thus begun between Holland and Portugal continued throughout the entire 17th century. When, after the capture in 1641 and the brief occupation of Loanda, the Dutch supplanted the Portuguese on the western shore of Africa, a new diplomatic current was established between them and the King of the Congo. The latter sent ambassadors to Brazil and Amsterdam and asked the Prince of Orange for help against the Portuguese. On the other hand, a Dutch delegation was received at the Congolese court; it proceeded between two rows of bearers of lighted candles before reaching the King's throne.

But soon the Portuguese recovered their lost positions. Then, actuated as in the preceding century by their greed for imaginary gold mines, they embarked on open warfare against the King, Don Antonio, and crushed the Congolese in the battle of Mpila in 1665.

From that time on, the decline of the kingdom of the Congo was swift. Crushed by military might, abandoned by commerce which had shifted to Angola, and weakened by the slave traffic, the Congo was reduced to vassalization and, as a phantom state, it was finally dismembered definitively in 1885 when it was partitioned among France, Portugal, and Leopold II.

Thus expired and disappeared the first and only native Congolese state that ever played a part in world history. The kingdom of the Congo had known a current of foreign commerce; it had opened its frontiers to the diffusion of European culture and religion; it had established diplomatic relations with Portugal, the Holy See, Brazil, and the Netherlands. Portugal had the undeniable merit of opening the country to a superior civilization and of treating it, at the start, not as a vassal but as a protected ally. Unfortunately, this system of protection involved in exchange monopolies of commerce, religion, and culture. Such privileges were soon corrupted, giving way to trickery and violence; and the alliance was transformed into such a vast system of exploitation that in three hundred years it succeeded in converting into a gigantic slave market this country which might have known a better fate.

## B.

### The Kingdom of the Bakuba.

Situated between Kasai and Sankuru, the kingdom of the Bakuba, or of the Bushongo, is perhaps the most ancient of the Congolese kingdoms, certainly the one where African civilization has reached its highest point, and the only one which, frozen in a kind of proud conservatism, has retained its ancient aspect down to the present day.

Oral tradition preserves an accurate list of more than one hundred and twenty Bakuba kings, the earliest of whom lived

in the 5th century of our era. It also preserves a precise recollection of the acts performed by these sovereigns, who were monarchs by divine right ; the wars they waged, the reforms they undertook, the progress they achieved. The checking of these stories by striking events that are known permits us to fix with certainty various dates in the history of the Bakuba, and thus determine when some of their kings lived. We know for example that King Bokama Bomanchala saw the eclipse at noon on March 30, 1680, and that King Bope Mobinji, who lived to be very old, saw the comet of 1843 and was the first to come in contact with Europeans at the time of the Wissman expedition of 1884.

Coming from the north, perhaps from the Sudanese savannas from which they made their way, cutting across the paths of the Bantu migration, the Bakuba are said to have traversed Sankuru as early as the 6th century to settle down in the territory they have occupied to this day. Their history is not so much that of a series of conquests as of the development of an original civilization which organized its social system and sought out its own esthetics. In this connection, it is a significant fact that the most famous of their kings was not a conqueror but a man of peace, a Maecenas of the arts : Shamba Bolongongo. He died at the beginning of the 17th century. He had the originality to abolish the use of weapons and especially of those famous throwing knives that earned his people the surname of « the lightning people ». It was also he who was the first to have a sculptor of his court execute his portrait statue. This work has been preserved down to the present time : it is the most ancient work of art to be found in Central Africa.

A taste for beauty is moreover one of the dominant traits of the Bakuba people. Everything in this country is decorated, chiseled : cosmetic boxes, cups, drums, walls of houses, etc. Conservatism is another of their characteristics : to this very day the ritual of past times has been preserved at the court of Nyimi : one can only approach the King's throne by conforming to strict etiquette and, by way of a labyrinth, following a carefully arranged and guarded itinerary. Patronized at the court, the artists of the kingdom of the Bakubas showed themselves in the past to be the equals of the sculptors of the Bénin. They attained

an African classicism which excelled in the expression of all the national forms and was not surpassed at any future time.

## C.

### The Empires of the Southeast.

In the southeast of the Congo, in Kasai and Katanga, countries also came into existence and had varying fates.

The most extensive and strongest of these countries was unquestionably **the empire of the Baluba**, which at its peak covered the territory stretching from Maniema to the South of Katanga, and from Bushimaie to Lakes Tanganika and Moero.

The empire of the Baluba was founded in the 16th century by Kongolo Mukulu ; he was beheaded by his people after having threatened to kill his own son of whom he was jealous. The history of this empire is above all a record of conquests and wars which lasted until the arrival of the Belgians. Successive intrigues then brought about its dismemberment.

Another important state was **the empire of the Lunda** located on the high plateaus of Kasai and extending its suzerainty as far as Kwango and Angola. Founded in the 16th century like the empire of the Baluba, the empire of the Lundas, by the strength of its political and military organization, earned for its leader, Mwata Yamo, a degree of prestige so great that it has lasted until today.

Finally, in the middle of the 19th century the last of these small empires, **the empire of Msiri**, came into existence, but only for a short time. Coming from Tanganyika, Msiri, who ruled over a territory of about 50,000 square miles, was a conqueror, a warrior, a businessman, and a despot. After cowing all the neighboring tribes, he made his capital, Bunkeya, a center for international trading where, in exchange for arms and munitions, one could obtain ivory, copper, iron, salt, and slaves in abundance.



Coming from the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, caravans from Zanzibar and Loanda converged on Bunkeya. When the Belgians arrived, Msiri had an army of ten thousand men, and the stakes in the palisades of Bunkeya were crowned with the skulls of his slain enemies. Soon his extortions became such that the subjugated population, threatened by famine, revolted. The Belgians put an end to his atrocities. Lieutenant Bodson killed Msiri in self-defense on December 20, 1891. His empire disappeared with him.

#### D.

### The Sultanates of the North.

From the 18th century on, Sudanese tribes crossed the frontiers of the Congo. They arrived in successive waves, but after reaching their destination they intermingled, overlapped, and united in groups of families to the point of constituting an inextricable mosaic made up of various clans.

In the South of the Uele, an elegant but frivolous civilization which still exists developed among the Mangbetu, who were famous for their artificially elongated heads; but to the north of the river the Azande sultanates, tough and warlike states, were set up.

These sultanates, divided into vassalized districts, were organized in such a manner that, like the spokes of a wheel, all trails converged from these districts on the capital but never connected one district with another. Thus the absence of contact among the vassals put a brake on any inclination to hatch a conspiracy.

When at the end of the 19th century the Belgian troops attacked the Madhists of the Sudan who had made several incursions into Congolese territory, they found valuable allies in some of these Azande sultans. These allies — such as Semio and Renzi — did not hesitate to throw into battle their thousands of lancers who fought side by side with the first contingents of Leopold II.

#### 3.

### Foreign Penetration.

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#### A.

### Arrival of the Portuguese in the Lower Congo.

In 1482, a European explorer who was skirting the western coast of Africa discovered the mouth of the Congo River: this explorer was the Portuguese Diego Cão.

Paradoxically this discovery of the Congo River came as a result of the wars that Christian Europe had undertaken against the Moslems. As a matter of fact, it was in driving back the last of the Moors after the fall of Ceuta, the key of North Africa, that the Portuguese thought of continuing on their way toward the south. For a long time this obsession of chasing « the Moor » was to remain with them; it was to accompany them when they discovered successively the Senegal, Congo and Zambesi Rivers. They attempted to go up each of the rivers they found along the Atlantic coast of Africa in the hope — never to be realized — of reaching some illusory inland lake that would open the way to another river, and from there to the fabled kingdom of « Prester John ». They planned to free this imaginary

kingdom from its infidel neighbors and then, with its aid, to take the forces of Islam from the rear somewhere near Egypt. Needless to say, this dream was never realized, but led to the opening of the first gates of Central Africa.

This bellicose dream was not the only motive that actuated the Portuguese. At the same time they were trying to discover a sure route that would lead them to the rich lands of the Indies. On the way, they marked the road with posts, sometimes fortified, and assured themselves of a trading monopoly. Very quickly the Portuguese commercial monopoly was to include an immense slave traffic.

The complexity of these motives explains the contradictory and changing aspects of the Portuguese penetration of Africa.

Two years after finding the mouth of the Congo River, Diego Cão returned in force, accompanied by a group of missionaries. He landed at Mpinda, a little port located on a creek on the southern bank not far from the mouth, a port that was to acquire a sinister fame because of the slave trade. From Mpinda, the missionaries reached the capital of the Congo kingdom, nearly two hundred miles in the interior, and there they met the sovereign, Nzinga Ntinu.

From that moment all the present day Lower Congo was for many years overrun by merchants, artisans, and missionaries (1). European life was about to be introduced into the country and to remain there until Portugal abandoned it for Angola.

At the same time, explorations were made in the interior. The results of these explorations were kept secret because they were often undertaken by merchants who were unwilling to help

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(1) Among the first arrivals there were some Belgians. Thus in 1610 a merchant from Antwerp — Pierre Van Broeck — bought ivory at the mouth of the Congo River. Several Belgian Capucin monks came to the Congo as missionaries; the most famous of them was Father Adrien Willems, who wrote the first Bantu dictionary and was stoned to death in 1641.

their competitors. However, in 1488, Diego Cão — in hopes of finding a way to get to the kingdom of Prester John — went up the river and reached a point above Matadi, where a carved stone still preserves the record of his arrival. Later, in 1652, a missionary, Father de Montesarchio, reached Stanley Pool and came into contact with the land of the Bateke. There he found already established Portuguese trading posts with Negroes in charge.

The commercial occupation of the Lower Congo was achieved by this time. Unfortunately, it was accompanied by extortions of all sorts that soon made it unpopular.

As for the work of the missionaries, it turned out to be precarious. As early as 1491, to be sure, the Congolese king had been baptized; in 1518 his grandson had become the first Congolese bishop; masons and carpenters from Europe had built churches; people were baptized on a tremendous scale, and a small contingent of Capucin monks had carried on their activities sporadically and in a small way until 1834. But Christianity, such as it was introduced at that time, did not, it seems, strike deep roots. Imposed by force, it had not really won the hearts of the people; very often it was inseparable from political opportunism. When the Belgians arrived at the end of the 19th century they found only a few vestiges of Christianity: some rites that had lost their meaning, here and there a church wall leveled with the ground and covered with grass, and some copper crucifixes, made in the region, that had been preserved for generations.

## B.

### The European Slave Traders.

Between the 15th and the 19th century, European ships carried away Negro slaves to America by millions. This traffic in human flesh was introduced by the Portuguese. It began in 1443 when a Portuguese trader brought back from the Gulf of



Guinea a group of 263 Africans. Soon the Portuguese became the masters of a chain of trading posts spread out all along the Atlantic coast of Africa. They divided up the continent in claims, just like a forest or mine. Speaking of the Congo, one of their writers described it as a « slave mine ».

It was the Congo that suffered the most from this traffic, because its inhabitants were in great demand in the slave market. At the beginning of the 16th century, Lisbon had become the chief slave market, supplying at the same time Portugal and the Americas. At that time, from ten thousand to twenty thousand were already being sold every year. Along the mouth of the Congo, captives that had arrived in caravans from the interior were kept in enclosures while waiting for buyers. The principal exportation port was Mpinda, on a creek on the south bank. It was at Mpinda that the first Portuguese expedition landed, and it was from there that, in the course of the following centuries, the unfortunate black slaves were exported by tens of thousands. Besides, Mpinda was a bone of contention several times in the course of history. In 1602 it was attacked by a French flotilla, in 1606 the Dutch attempted to take possession of it. Both attempts were repulsed by the Portuguese. For two centuries, the 15th and the 16th century, the Portuguese retained a monopoly of the slave trade at Mpinda.

But at the dawn of modern times, the other European powers became commercial competitors. The decline of Portugal set in while the strength of France, England, and the Netherlands grew.

After the fall of Loanda in 1641, the Dutch got their trading posts away from the Portuguese and replaced them in the slave trade. The Portuguese resisted. Combats took place in the Lower Congo; the Dutch trading posts at Mpinda were razed in 1648, but everything was finally settled by an agreement that gave Holland the right to engage in the slave trade. A little later the English in their turn made their appearance in the Congolese installations. As early as 1701, they possessed at Mpinda a trading post that bought slaves from the Mussorongo.

By the end of the 17th century the slave trade, which had started as a Portuguese monopoly, had become a gigantic international undertaking. The places where slaves were kept became more and more numerous and profitable. The French appeared in their turn, drove the Portuguese away from the port of Cabinda and installed their slave markets chiefly beyond the north bank of the river toward Loango and Malemba, while the English traded in the estuary.

In the course of a single year, in 1778, 104,000 slaves had been exported from Africa; one third of them came from the Congo and Angola.

It should be noted that these slaves, after having been found at first in the region at the mouth of the river, later were taken from more and more remote parts of the country, the supply having dwindled. In order to find slaves, expeditions were organized. These were generally commanded by « pombeiros », black or half-breed traders in the service of the Portuguese. In the 17th century some of these expeditions went as far as Lake Leopold II, and later as far as Katanga. Sometimes trading tribes, such as the Beteke, served as go-betweens and resold in the vicinity of Leopoldville slaves from the Upper Congo. Commercial trails linked the Kwango and Stanley Pool to the main trail that led to the ports of Angola. Profiting by all this activity, some Europeans proceeded very far into the interior, such as the Dutchman de Helder, who, soon after 1641, led an expedition as far as Muende Kundi on the Kwango.

The 19th century was destined to see at the same time the apogee of the slave trade and its disappearance.

Already in the 18th century, public opinion had become conscious of the situation and a strong reaction against the traffic in human flesh had taken shape. This reaction gradually grew stronger. The ideas of 1789 opened a new era. England took the first step, abolishing the slave trade in 1807, and slavery itself in her colonies in 1833. This example was followed by Portugal in 1835 and by France in 1848.

But for a long time these decrees remained dead letters : they clashed with too many commercial interests. In practice, the result was to make the slave traffic clandestine, but it flourished just the same. Reliable statistics show that between 1840 and 1848, from fifty thousand to eighty thousand blacks were shipped out of Africa every year. In 1850 the estuary of the Congo River was still lined with numerous slave warehouses for which Boma was the great supply center. Soon after, the Portuguese went as far as Katanga to buy slaves from Msiri.

Indeed, it was necessary to wait until the end of the 19th century to see slavery die out, thanks especially to the introduction of new means of production. In 1877, drowned slaves were still found in the river at Boma, their hands tied, an iron collar around their necks, and the name of the slave trader engraved on the chains. And yet the number of slaves exported from the Congo had fallen between 1860 and 1874 from thirty thousand to two thousand.

However, some clandestine centers still existed in Angola. They supplied with workers the trading posts in the interior of the country. These centers attempted, as in the past, to find their human merchandise on Congolese soil. Some of the suppliers did not hesitate, in exchange for captured enemies, to furnish arms to certain Congolese tribes, such as the Batshiok of Kwango and, at the very beginning of the 20th century, the Batetela rebels that had taken refuge in Katanga.

When the Belgians arrived in the Congo, their first objective — fixed by Leopold II — was the suppression of the slave trade. Up to that time, in four hundred years, merely by the western route, more than fifteen million Congolese had been shipped out. Ten million of them had died en route as a result of bad treatment.

The Belgian occupation and the strict surveillance exercised at the frontiers put an end to the last incursions from Angola and saved the endangered tribes.

## C. The Arab Slave Traders.

Hardly had the slave trade diminished in the West when it developed with increased intensity all over the East of the Congo. This time it was no longer a question of America's need for cheap labor, but the harems and palaces of the Middle East clamoring for women and servants.

As early as the 8th century, the Arabs had extended their domination over the east coast of Africa ; along the Indian Ocean they had built cities which today lie buried under tropical forests. Repulsed at the end of the 15th century by the Portuguese who had sailed all around the continent, the Arabs soon got a new foothold in Africa and, two hundred years later, they had again become the masters of the east coast, extending their domination far to the south.

When did the first Arabs penetrate the Congo ? It is difficult to ascertain, but it has been averred that at the beginning of the 19th century Congolese women were already found in the harems of Osman and Mascate. For a long time the Arabs were satisfied to make local raids, together with rare incursions into the interior, just as the Portuguese had formerly done in the Lower Congo. However, as needs became greater, especially now that the Russian market in white slaves was suppressed, the Arabs ventured nearer and nearer to the heart of Africa. In 1840 they reached Lake Tanganika, and in 1858 the explorers Burton and Speke gave the world the first report on the Arab slave traders, who had set up a base at Uvira. From Uvira they branched out toward Urundi and Katanga where they met their Portuguese counterparts.

From that time on they made the Congo their hunting ground. With the help of cannibal tribes, from which they often



had to protect their captives, they ravaged entire regions with fire and sword. Generally, half-breeds led these expeditions and organized the markets just as the « pombeiros » had done for the Portuguese.

It took the Arab forces twenty years to occupy the region which extends from Lake Tanganika to Lualaba. In 1860 they reached the Congo River, settled down there and founded Nyangwe, which was to be their African capital for a long time. From Nyangwe a network of posts — Kirundu, Kabambare, etc. — supplied relays as far as Tanganika. It took them another twenty years to reach Stanleyville. In 1883 Stanley, in going up the river, met them at Basoko and in Aruwimi which they were ravaging.

Meanwhile, other Arab expeditions were setting out from the Sudan. Being organized on a smaller scale, they skirted the redoubtable Azande sultanates and made raids on the Mangbetu and Abarambo tribes of Uele. They reached their greatest strength at the time of the attacks made by the Madhists.

Were there Arab explorers who — foreshadowing Stanley — went down the river, at least as far as Stanley Pool if not to the sea? In the absence of known records the question remains unanswered, but it is certain that as early as the middle of the 19th century, the Arabs knew better than the European explorers that the Lualaba River was the Congo and not the Nile, and at that time several of them described the estuary of the river, its boats and trading posts.

How many Congolese were traded as slaves during the few decades that the Arab slave trade lasted? Here also records that could give us a definite answer are lacking. It is known that some caravans which covered the six hundred miles separating Tanganika from the Indian Ocean included no fewer than two thousand slaves. It has been estimated that at the height of their power in Africa the Arabs shipped out about seventy thousand Congolese a year. To this number actually sold into slavery must

be added many who were massacred, because the Arab raids were unusually ferocious and murderous. We can get an indication of the part played by the Congo in the slave trade of the time by consulting the population statistics of Zanzibar, the ancient capital of the slave trade. Today, of 200,000 blacks who inhabit the sultanate, half are descendants of slaves and 2,000 of these still claim to be of Congolese origin.

Soon the Arab occupation became so powerful in the Congo that one of these traffickers carved out a sultanate for himself there; he was the most famous of the slave traders of the time, Tippu-Tip. When the first Belgians arrived they found him to be too strong a potentate to be attacked with any chance of success by their feeble numbers. At that time, Tippu-Tip was unquestionably the master of the entire regions of Maniema and Lomami and his raids stretched from the Upper Ituri in the east to the Lulonga in the west; thus they tended to reach out as far as the territories exploited by the slave traders of Khartum. It was wiser to come to terms with Tippu-Tip and try to win him over to new ventures. Tippu-Tip showed himself to be a clever diplomat in dealing with the newcomers. Gradually changing his man-hunting grounds, he manoeuvred with such skill as to keep the explorers away from his hidden domains. Finally, Stanley himself, confronted by such power, saw fit to conciliate him by cajoling him. In 1887, in the name of Leopold II, he made Tippu-Tip governor of the province of the Falls, which covered practically the whole East of the Congo. There was only one condition: to collaborate with the Belgians in the suppression of the slave trade. Did Tippu-Tip live up to the agreement? It seems that, on the advice of the sultan of Zanzibar, he resigned himself to the inevitable. Three years later, realizing that new times were coming, he gave up his post of governor and left his former African kingdom for good.

Then suddenly the entire network of Arab posts rebelled. A new era began: that of the Arab campaigns in the course of which, at the cost of numerous sacrifices, the Belgians finally wiped out every trace of slavery.

## D.

### The Explorations of the XIXth Century.

The Portuguese, in their discovery of Africa, had been spurred on in part by the illusion that they would reach an imaginary kingdom, that of Prester John. A new motive was to guide most of the 19th century explorers, who came from European countries : to solve the problem of the sources of the Nile.

Little by little, the mystery of the heart of Africa was to be penetrated. This was done by successive parties of explorers who, criss-crossing the peripheral zones, culminated in Stanley's sensational exploit.

In 1798, the Portuguese F. Lacerda had already gone as far as Katanga and found out about the copper mines. But the great current of scientific explorations did not start until 1816. In that year, the Englishman J. Tuckey entered the estuary of the Congo in order to find out if it was not the Niger. The ill-starred expedition was decimated by fever : out of fifty-six people, eighteen died on the way. J. Tuckey was among these, but his undertaking had not been useless. The expedition had gone up the river as far as the rapids of Isangila, far above Matadi, and near the site of Inga. Furthermore, the expedition brought back to Europe the first detailed studies of the regions traversed.

As early as the middle of the century, exploring activity was intensified. In the East of the Congo successive expeditions, searching for the sources of the Nile, discovered the great lakes. The Englishmen C. F. Burton and J. H. Speke arrived in Tanganika in 1858, and their compatriot S. W. Baker reached Lake Albert in 1860. In the North, between 1870 and 1872, the German G. A. Schweinfurt succeeded in getting to Uele, and the Italian G. Miani reached Bomokandi.

At the same time, Livingstone arrived from the south and discovered Lake Moero, where he met Tippo-Tip. Later, taking

the opportunity presented by a caravan of Arab traffickers, he left Tanganika and arrived at Nyangwe on the banks of the Lualaba River on March 29, 1871. On that day a European saw the upper course of the Congo River for the first time. Were these the waters of the Nile or of the old Zaire ? Livingstone asked himself this question. He probably suspected that it was the Congo, but the wily Arabs prevented him from going ahead. Moreover, the region was periodically drenched with blood by the slave merchants. Disgusted by the massacres he had seen, Livingstone returned to Tanganika by the end of the same year. That is where he was found by Stanley, who was to spend several months traveling with him in the region.

Soon another European reached the same bank of the Lualaba. The Englishman Cameron, who had also started from Tanganika, discovered the Lukuga, traversed regions infested by the slave traders and arrived — as Livingstone had three years earlier — at Nyangwe, the great Arab capital. Advancing scientific arguments. Cameron was the first to declare positively that the waters flowing before him were not those of the Nile, but of the Congo. On August 28, 1874, aided by Tippo-Tip, he succeeded in crossing the Lualaba, but this attempt to explore the mysterious river ended there. By dint of persuasion, and trickery covered up by smiles, the clever Tippo-Tip managed to dissuade Cameron from exploring further downstream, so much so that the English officer retracing his steps, soon went up the Lomami. Passing through Kamina, he reached Angola and then the Atlantic the following year, after having succeeded in going all the way across Africa.

It was Stanley who had the luck and the merit to be the first to go down the Congo River.

From Europe, where he had gone after his meeting with Livingstone, Stanley soon returned to Africa. At the very moment when Cameron turned his back on good fortune, Stanley plunged into the interior of the continent. Two years later, on October 18, 1876, he reached Kasongo where he too met Tippo-Tip. More fortunate than his predecessor, Stanley succeeded in impressing the potentate and luring him on with a bait : for five



thousand dollars, Tippo-Tip agreed to accompany the explorer for three months. At the beginning of November, the two men left Nyangwe together and went down the river in a collapsible boat that Stanley's men had carried on their backs all the way from the Indian Ocean.

But a few weeks later, at the end of December, Tippo-Tip, discouraged by the dangers of the undertaking and the illnesses that were making frightful ravages among his men, left his companion after having accompanied him as far as Kindu. From that time on, Stanley was alone with his escort in a hostile environment. He plunged forward into the unknown... When he reached Boma in August of the following year, he had lost all his European companions and two-thirds of his effectives. But this exhausted man brought back, with the discovery of the course of the Congo River, the key to a problem first posed in 1482.

Henceforth, in the east and in the west, routes leading from both oceans to the heart of Africa were open. Africa was entering the modern world.

### CHAPTER III THE CONGO IN OUR TIME

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## 1.

### How the Congo Free State was Created.

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#### A.

#### Creation of the International African Association.

Since the sensational meeting of Livingstone and Stanley in Tanganika and the publication of the reports of the explorers who had just penetrated the very heart of equatorial Africa, Europe had had its eyes turned in that direction. A strong current of genuine interest was in the making. The King of the Belgians, Leopold II, felt immediately that he might thus be



given an opportunity to realize at last a dream which had been that of Leopold I and which he himself had cherished since his youth : to assure Belgium's prosperity by giving her the chance to a broad commercial expansion.

However, it was necessary to act with skill, speed, and prudence. The King was destined to make use of all his tact and ability in dealing with this matter.

Leopold II took the initiative of organizing, in his private and personal capacity, an international geographic conference. It was to meet under his chairmanship at Brussels on September 12, 1876. Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Great Britain, Italy, Russia and Belgium were represented. The Sovereign, in opening the meeting, emphasized the necessity of freeing Africa from slavery and of introducing civilization.

The discussions led to the creation of a new organization : the « International African Association ». Its aims were to abolish the slave trade and open up Africa to international commerce.

In order to realize its aims, the Association proposed to organize exploratory expeditions and to establish hospitals and scientific posts. In order to do this, it reorganized itself as a central committee presided over by the King, and various national committees.

The Belgian committee financed by Leopold II and by national subscriptions was the most active. Between 1877 and 1884, it organized five expeditions at the head of which were E. F. Cambier, E. Popelin, G. Ramaekers, E. P. J. Storms, J. Becker and A. E. Durette ; it was then that the posts of Karema and M'Pala were founded on Lake Tanganika.

As early as 1877, the central committee of the Association had taken as its emblem the flag with one gold star which was later to become that of the Congo Free State.

## B.

### Creation of the Committee for the Study of the Upper Congo and of the International Association of the Congo.

But while the Belgian committee of the International African Association was getting a foothold in Africa, the King's plans were upset by a decisive event : Stanley's successful expedition down the Congo River.

Leopold II immediately grasped the immense significance of this discovery ; when Stanley disembarked at Marseilles in January 1878 on his way home, he found two representatives of the King waiting for him. However, the explorer at first declined the offers that were made to him. It was only later, after he had encountered nothing but indifference on the part of the British and the American government, that he turned to Leopold II.

From that time on, the Congo entered contemporary history : expeditions studied the country ; centers of civilization were built ; the first boats were launched and the first roads constructed. Out of the collaboration of Stanley and Leopold II the Congo of today arose.

The first interview between the King and the explorer took place in June 1878. The foundations were laid for future action,

and towards the end of the year, in November, a « Committee for the Study of the Upper Congo » was set up with the collaboration of businessmen.

The aims of this committee were of a commercial nature : to find ways of establishing easy communication between the Lower and the Upper Congo, the two sections of the river being separated by a series of impassible falls and rapids which presented an obstacle to profitable trading. Some way of avoiding this obstacle would have to be found. Afterwards a flotilla would have to be launched on the river and posts established that would serve as relay stations.

The first expedition organized by the Committee set out in 1879. It was commanded by Stanley who was accompanied by a staff of Belgian officers. Among these were Cambier and Hanssens, who later relieved Stanley as the chief of operations. Results came quickly. Within three years, thirty posts were established, among them Leopoldville ; a road was laid out and on it men carried on their backs — in detached parts — the first steamers to be launched, at Leopoldville, on the immense navigable stretch of the river. At the same time the exploration of the country was organized and treaties with the native chiefs were concluded. They were both political and commercial in character and they granted the newcomers the right to occupy the land. In fact, later on when internationally recognized, these treaties were destined to legalize the rights acquired to this African territory.

However, in addition to the avowed aims of the Committee, Leopold II was already thinking of the creation of a state in the Congo basin. This design appears clearly in the secret instructions given to Stanley in 1879. These instructions concern the treaties to be concluded with the native chiefs and they reveal the monarch's plan of acquiring sovereignty over the territory explored and of constituting gradually a confederation of which he would be the founder and sovereign.

The realization of this plan of creating a sovereign state was to be accelerated by a new organization that superseded the Committee for the Study of the Upper Congo. As a matter of fact, the latter had come to an end for financial reasons, and Leopold II had replaced it by another organization, more pliable, over which he had much greater power : the « International Association of the Congo ». It was in the name of this new organization that the gradual occupation of the country proceeded. This Association was soon to engender the Congo Free State.

### C.

#### Creation of the Congo Free State.

Under the direction of Leopold II, the International Association of the Congo manifested surprising vitality. A small group of men had finally succeeded in overcoming the obstacle that the rapids of the river had opposed for centuries to any penetration starting from the Atlantic. Within a few years, expeditions became more and more frequent and branched out into the interior of the country. Commercial activities were started and communications reached even the most remote regions. As early as 1885, the Association had to its credit, in addition to the launching of a flotilla of five steamers, the establishment of a network of forty posts which covered nearly half of the present-day Congo and, especially, a total of more than five hundred treaties of suzerainty concluded with the native chiefs.

Meanwhile, the great nations were carefully observing this work accomplished under the stimulus of the sovereign of a small neutral country. At the same time, they kept watching each other because they coveted the same part of Africa. The entrance of the Belgian King on the international scene might offer them a solution that would prevent the destruction of the precarious



equilibrium of forces that had been brought about in Europe toward the end of the preceding century.

Leopold II knew how to profit by this situation. With great skill, he was able simultaneously to turn to his advantage the rivalries that divided the great powers, and also to call the world's attention to the importance of the work accomplished in Africa under his guidance. After checkmating the Portuguese claims to the mouth of the Congo River, he secured recognition of the validity of the treaties concluded with the native chiefs, and he signed, in the name of the Association, international agreements with France and Germany. Finally, on April 11, 1884, for the first time, a great power, the United States, officially recognized the International Association of the Congo as a sovereign state. From that time on, events moved rapidly.

Germany, in view of the international repercussions that European penetration of Central Africa might have, took the initiative of assembling representatives of fourteen countries at Berlin. The Berlin Conference lasted more than four months, from November 15, 1884 to February 26, 1885. On February 23, the matter was settled: the status of a sovereign state was unanimously accorded by all these nations to the International Association of the Congo, and it was in that capacity that the latter, three days later, signed the « General Act of Berlin » with the other countries. This was an act concerning the conventional basin of the Congo, which was occupied not only by the Association but also by the French, the Portuguese, the English, the Germans, and the Italians. The new state in its entirety was contained within the area of this conventional basin.

The General Act of Berlin confirmed the abolition of the slave trade and the obligation to improve the moral and material living condition of the natives; furthermore, it broke new ground in imposing an economic regime based on a certain amount of internationalization and a strict adhesion to the principle of free trade. The conventional basin of the Congo was to be open to

the commerce of all countries, thus excluding any kind of monopoly or preferential treatment in regard to either ships or merchandise.

Thus Leopold II secured recognition of the existence of the African state he had wanted to create.

Belgium soon ratified the new position of her King. Indeed, it was in April 1885 that the Belgian parliament authorized Leopold II to be the head of the new state founded in Africa, while at the same time stipulating that the union between Belgium and that state should rest exclusively with the person of the Sovereign.

On May 29, a decree changed the name of the « International Association of the Congo » to « Congo Free state ».

On July 19, 1885, a solemn proclamation of the accession to the throne of Leopold II as sovereign of the Congo Free State was made at Banana, in the Congo, and on August 1 official notification of this proclamation was given to all the powers.

## 2. The Congo Free State.

### A. Organization.

The Conference of Berlin made Leopold II the ruler of a territory of nearly a million square miles. His sovereignty over that vast region was absolute ; he directed the country's politics, diplomacy, and economy according to his own discretion.

But the Act of Berlin had made the validity of this sovereignty contingent on the actual occupation of the country. It was necessary to set about this task as quickly as possible. An immense domain had to be occupied, its administration and army had to be organized, the region had to be developed and the slave trade brought to an end. And all this had to be done with resources that were very uncertain because of the economic

regime that had been imposed on the new state. Indeed, customs duties had been forbidden, and four years passed before such Draconian measures were somewhat relaxed. In 1889 a new international conference met at Brussels with the aim of co-ordinating the measures taken by the powers against the slave trade. Leopold II took advantage of this opportunity to secure a relaxation of the rules that weighed so heavily on the economy of the young state and he was authorized to impose customs duties up to a limit of 10 % ad valorem.

Without delay Leopold II appealed to his people, to the army, the financiers, and the civil servants, asking them to help him carry through his work in the Congo. The response evoked by this appeal was mixed. Among the general public there was apathy, skepticism, and even hostility. However, the King always found an elite that gave him the help he needed. From the start, the army responded to his appeal ; numerous commissioned and non-commissioned Belgian officers — joined by many foreigners, among them Italians and Swedes — went out to Africa to bring about an occupation and pacification that called for heroism. Among these pioneers, Coquilhat, Hanssens, Vandevelde, Cambier, Van Gele distinguished themselves. While the Congolese territory was divided from this time on into districts commanded by commissioners, an administrative general staff of which Van Eetvelde, Droogmans, Cuvelier, Liebrecht were notable members ruled it from Brussels. Meanwhile the King was arousing interest in his new project among businessmen whose support later enabled him to persevere despite great financial difficulties. Thys, Empain and Lambert gave him a great deal of help during these difficult years.

In 1890 a gigantic task was undertaken : the construction of a railroad line which was to link Matadi and Leopoldville and thus, by putting an end to portage on the caravan trail, connect the navigable sections of the Lower Congo and the Upper Congo. Eight years later the first Congolese railroad conveyed the products of the equatorial forests to seagoing vessels anchored in the river before Matadi.



## B. Use of Armed Forces.

But this work of peaceful penetration and occupation was soon to encounter serious obstacles that had to be met with armed force.

The first and most important of these obstacles was the Arab occupation which, by stirring up intertribal warfare and ceaselessly extending its manhunting activities, created a reign of terror throughout the eastern part of the country.

The abolition of the slave trade was one of the major obligations imposed on Leopold II by the Act of Berlin; this obligation had been confirmed at the Brussels Conference of 1889. At the same time a strong anti-slavery current was aroused among the public under the stimulus of Cardinal Lavigerie. But in order to engage in battle with the Arab posts and their armed militia which constituted a formidable barrage from Stanleyville to Tanganika, adequate troops were needed. While waiting for its own military forces to be organized, the Congo Free State, making use of diplomacy, attempted by means of offices, money and honors to conciliate the most powerful of the Arab leaders, such as Tippu-Tip. The first skirmish had taken place at Stanleyville in 1886. When Tippu-Tip withdrew from the Congo in 1890, incidents suddenly began to occur in rapid succession. Belgian officers were massacred; in fact, the entire chain of Arab posts was aroused and a full-scale war ensued. It was then that a series of bloody combats started in which numerous Belgian heroes such as Dhanis, Michaux, Chaltin, Lothaire, Henry won renown. These combats lasted fifteen years and extended over the country from north to south. Gradually the pro-slavery forces were driven as far as Tanganika, where the last battle took place in 1894. By that time the Arabs had lost seventy thousand men. The result, attained at great cost, was definitive: the slave trade in the east of the country had been abolished.

But at about the same time the military activities of the Congo Free State were also directed to the Sudanese frontier. It happened that other slave traders, the rebellious Madhists, who had become masters of the Sudan, were menacing the Congo Free State, where they had already made several incursions. The northeast frontier had to be safeguarded by sending expeditions which immediately found valuable allies among the sultans of Uele. Following up these successes, Leopold II did not hesitate to go beyond the frontier and for several years he maintained a series of Belgian posts throughout the entire region of Bahr-el-Gazal. The Sovereign's plans have never become known in their entirety, but it seems that they aimed at giving the Congo Free State access to the Nile, thus linking the country with the Mediterranean. However, he encountered strong opposition on the part of the French and the English, both desirous of maintaining their Sudanese positions, and he had to give up these plans for expansion. Soon he drew back his posts, retaining nothing in the Sudan except the enclave of Lido on which England had given him a lease for life.

Finally, the young state had to face a test that put its very existence in danger. A mutiny broke out among the Batetela troops. This mutiny marked the darkest hour in the history of the Congo Free State. Indeed, the rebels, who could be counted among the most courageous and most warlike soldiers in the armed forces, carried on the struggle fiercely, using European weapons which they had kept and applying the tactical instruction they had received. This rebellion, begun in 1895, lasted many years, dying out in one spot only to be rekindled elsewhere. It was not definitely crushed until 1907.

The repression of this revolt of the Batetela put an end once for all to the Portuguese incursions into the Congo. In exchange for munitions, bands of Portuguese who had settled down on the plateau of Bihé in Angola had organized a slave traffic with a Batetela contingent that had taken refuge in Katanga. In 1902 Major Malfeyt gave battle to a band of Portuguese half-breeds, crushed it and captured about forty

rifles. The establishment of a post at Dilolo the following year assured the protection of the region against incursions from Angola.

### C. Development.

While the armed forces were driving out the slave traders and pacifying the country, a colossal task of organization and development was under way.

Expeditions continued to carry on the exploration and occupation of the country. Four of them, between 1890 and 1893, brought about the occupation of Katanga, a region coveted by Cecil Rhodes. It was then that the Belgian geologist Jules Cornet (1865-1929) discovered the immense mineral wealth of that region. A special organization — the Special Committee for Katanga — was created to plan the exploitation of the region by the Congo Free State and the Katanga Company in partnership. It had received liberal commissions in exchange for services rendered in the course of the occupation of the territory.

At the same time, commercial companies were founded, crop culture was introduced, stock raising was undertaken, and the exportation of natural resources was organized. In 1905 and 1906, the first gold and copper mines began to be exploited. Finally, the railroad of the Lower Congo was supplemented by railroads that covered the east of the country with a network that became more and more complex. This economic development was accompanied by the organization of an administrative and judicial system that was gradually extended and strengthened. Furthermore, a start was made on civil legislation.

However, such an effort involved immense expenses. The Congo Free State tried to cope with the situation by means of taxes and customs duties; the King himself made a contribution from his private fortune. But these resources turned out to be insufficient. Other means had to be found without delay. The young state was spurred on by immense needs; in order to satisfy them it was led to take upon itself the task of exploiting the territory. For this purpose it reserved for itself, from 1891 on, all the vacant land, and subjected the natives to a tax in kind. In this connection a series of decrees organized the gathering of ivory and rubber on land belonging to the state. This system was combined with a tax in kind that was collected not only by officials but also by the employees of farming companies commissioned to gather the natural resources on behalf of the state. Such a system gave rise to serious local abuses that were encouraged by the granting of premiums to the agents in charge.

Against these abuses a storm of protests quickly arose, not only in Belgium but also abroad. Vehement campaigns were launched, sometimes unjust or dictated by self-interest. The climax was reached when a White Book published by the British government brought together all the accusations that had been made against the Congo Free State.

Confronted by this wave of public opinion, Leopold II did not hesitate to set up a commission of inquiry. Created on July 23, 1904, the latter consisted of three magistrates of different nationalities. This commission, to which royal instructions had given unlimited authority, spent five months in the Congo. The report it submitted on returning to Belgium put things in their true light: no doubt individual abuses had been committed, no doubt reforms were needed in certain matters; but on the whole, the activities of the Congo Free State could be judged favorably. This report expressly declares: « Although our mission has been confined to investigating the bad treatment or the abuses that the natives have complained of and ascertaining what evil has been done, we believe that we have the right to point out in passing the good that has impressed us. When one travels in the Congo and compares the older Congo, as we know it from the



writings and descriptions of the explorers, with the Congo of today, the impression received is one of admiration and wonder. The Free State, by the prodigies it has accomplished in twenty years, has given the world the opportunity — in fact, we ought to say the right — to expect a great deal of it. »

The recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry were followed up by Leopold II. Numerous reforms were made in the system ; they were the subject of a series of new decrees signed in 1906.

### 3.

## **The Belgian Congo.**

### **A.**

### **How the Congo Free State became a Belgian Colony.**

The Congo Free State lasted twenty-three years. In 1908, it became a Belgian colonial possession.

How can this transformation of an independent country into a colony be explained ? The change did not come unexpectedly ; neither was it, as people might believe, purely a result of the campaigns against Leopold's rule. As a matter of fact, the annexation of the Congo by Belgium came as a result of a long period of preparation. It was brought about by the wishes of the Sovereign, the great financial aid that Belgium had given the Congo Free State at a difficult moment, and the ever-growing consciousness that the Belgian people felt, at the beginning of this century, of their responsibilities in regard to this African achievement.

A succession of events marks the stages that paved the way for this annexation.

The point of departure goes back to 1889. In that year Leopold II had made a will in which he declared that he « bequeathed and transmitted to Belgium, after his death, all his sovereign rights over the Congo Free State. »

The following year, the agreement of July 5, 1890 constituted another step forward for Belgium. By this agreement, the Belgian government lent the sum of 25,000,000 francs to the Congo Free State.

As a guarantee for this loan, Belgium was given an option which assured her the right to annex the Congo at the end of ten years. This possible annexation was not without conditions, notably the condition that the debt contracted would be extinguished through integration.

A new stage was reached in 1901. At that time the agreement of 1890 came into effect, and Belgium was free to exercise its option. A motion in favor of annexation had already been brought up in Parliament when Leopold II, while confirming his testament and reaffirming Belgium's right to annex the Congo Free State, requested that annexation be postponed until the moment when the Congo would be truly productive. As a matter of fact, the King wanted to avoid the dangers involved in a hasty and badly prepared annexation.

Deferring to the King's wishes, Parliament then instructed a committee made up of deputies belonging to all parties to prepare a bill on « the government of the colonial possessions of Belgium ». Thus began the last stage of the evolution. The campaigns launched against the system set up in the Congo contributed to precipitate events, and on December 3, 1907 the bill was submitted to the bureau of the Chamber of Deputies. This bill authorized the cession to Belgium of « the sovereignty over the territories comprising the Congo Free State, with all the rights and obligations appurtenant thereto ».

After laborious negotiations, in the course of which the minister Beernert gave the King effectual support, on August 20, 1908 Parliament passed the law providing for the annexation of the Congo. On November 15 of the same year the Congo Free State ceased to exist and became the « Belgian Congo ».

## B.

### Early Progress of the Belgian Congo.

Belgium was now in possession of a territory eighty times as large as herself. A great deal had already been achieved there ; a great deal remained to be done.

What did Belgium find when she took stock of the country she received from her King ?

The raids and the slave trade had been checked. A solid network of administrative posts and a diligent military occupation had established peace where the first explorers had found only terror and permanent insecurity. Religious missions, Catholic and Protestant, had undertaken the work of preaching the gospel ; schools and dispensaries had been opened. Furthermore, commerce and industry were beginning to be organized. The official medical services had undertaken a struggle against the diseases that were decimating the population. Everywhere the material and moral condition of the natives had been bettered, and the reforms decided upon in 1906 by Leopold II were being applied.

What needed to be done was therefore to develop and improve the work that had already been undertaken. The foundations had been laid ; the edifice needed to be completed.

It was the first Belgian minister of the colonies, Jules Renkin, who gave this new phase its first impetus.

Leopold II had died in December 1909, a year after the annexation ; Albert I succeeded him. The young sovereign gave Renkin his entire support.



The first important reform occurred in 1910 by means of a body of decrees tending to do away with all obstacles that hampered free commerce, to replace the tax in kind by a tax in money, and to introduce a system of indirect administration in the districts under the rule of native chieftains.

At the same time, a new stimulus was given to the colony's economy. Private commerce grew, the use of money among the natives became general, new railroad lines covered the entire eastern part of the Colony, and telegraphic communications were established connecting Katanga with the Atlantic coast.

Agriculture itself was undergoing a change. The rudimentary practice of food-gathering was being replaced by the raising of food crops and products for industrial purposes.

At the same time the mining industry was becoming increasingly important. To the riches already prospected, diamonds were added; and then, in 1911, the first casting of Katanga copper took place.

The future of the country looked bright when war broke out in 1914.

### C.

#### World War I (1914-1918).

The Act of Berlin of 1885 imposed neutrality on the conventional basin of the Congo. Because of this obligation the Belgian government had, at the beginning of World War I, called upon the Congo to maintain a strictly defensive attitude toward the German forces stationed in Africa.

But as early as August 1914, the Germans made incursions into the Congo by crossing its eastern frontier, thus violating the neutrality of the Colony.

After that, the Belgian government could legitimately abandon its « wait and see » attitude and give the Congolese troops the order to take the offensive. In the west, as early as October 1914, a detachment joined the Franco-British troops who were attacking German Cameroon. This detachment participated in the capture of the Sangha and co-operated in the encirclement of the enemy forces until the fall of Yaounde, in January 1916. Meanwhile, two Congo companies went to the aid of the English in Rhodesia, where the Germans had attacked Abercorn; this Belgian intervention resulted in driving the Germans out of the British territory.

These first two Belgian campaigns thus ended in victory. A large-scale offensive was to follow them.

As a matter of fact, while these expeditions in Cameroon and Rhodesia were taking place, other Belgian forces stationed in the East of the Congo were preparing, in conjunction with the English, a powerful attack against German East Africa.

This offensive began in August 1916. The Congolese troops, commanded by General Tombeur, were divided in two brigades: one, the northern brigade, under the orders of Colonel Molitor, was to march to Lake Victoria; the other, the southern brigade, under the command of Colonel Olsen, had as its objective the railroad connecting Tanganika with the Indian Ocean. Lake Victoria was reached after hard fighting, while the southern brigade captured Kigoma. The two brigades, uniting their efforts, converged toward Tabora where the center of German resistance was concentrated. On September 19, 1916, Tabora fell. Shortly after, the Belgian government placed Tabora in the hands of the British authorities. The objective gained, the bulk of the troops returned to their bases in the Congo.

But several months later, in August 1917, the German forces commanded by General von Lettov-Vorbeck launched

such a vigorous counter-offensive that the British government was compelled to turn again to the Belgians for help. The Congolese troops, which had been demobilized at the end of the campaign of 1916, were rapidly reconstituted and, under the command of General Huyghe, they took up the fight again. Once more they were victorious. Huyghe soon captured Mahenge, and the fleeing enemy was driven as far as Mozambique. The armistice of November 11, 1918 put an end to the last skirmishes.

Crowning the important part that Belgium had played in the African war, the Peace Conference, meeting in 1919, gave her a mandate over the former German territories of Ruanda-Urundi, which are today territories under trusteeship.

#### D.

### The Congo between the two World Wars.

The war had destroyed the validity of the Act of Berlin. It was replaced in September 1919 by the Convention of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The latter reserved the system of the open door for commerce in the Congo basin exclusively for the signatory countries and for the members of the League of Nations adhering to the Convention; furthermore it authorized Belgium to fix customs duties in the Congo for ships and merchandise.

From that moment on the Congo underwent a remarkable economic development; the relaxing of the Draconian regime imposed by the Act of Berlin was unquestionably one of the reasons for this increased prosperity which was accompanied by tremendous progress in administrative organization, social life, and scientific research.

Economically, the Congo after World War I was open to broader and more fruitful exploitation. At that time there were already nearly two thousand business firms. This progress kept increasing until the time of the world-wide depression of 1930-1935. The consequences of this depression were very serious for the Congo because its prosperity depended essentially on the exportation of raw materials. The Congo had to wait a long time — in fact, until the events of 1940 — to see a complete business recovery take place. However, even in the midst of the depression the task of strengthening the economic structure of the colony went on without respite.

As early as 1920, the second minister of the colonies, Louis Franck, had undertaken a vast program of public works: equipping the ports, developing communications, encouraging air navigation. At the same time he fostered agriculture, notably cotton growing, which would bring resources to entire regions. He backed up this economic program with a sound policy in regard to the natives that led to the stabilization of the native centers and an improvement in the living conditions of the workmen.

Things were going well for the Congo, and the Colony enjoyed an era of prosperity which lasted until about 1930. During that period, the development of Kivu was undertaken; large scale stock-raising began in Katanga; coffee plantations and palm tree products ranked high, together with cotton, in Congolese economy. The railroad to the Cape, which by 1910 had already reached the Katanga frontier, was prolonged across Congolese territory as far as Port-Francqui on the Kasai, thus linking the mining provinces and the Atlantic on national soil. Shortly after, another railroad, starting from Lobito and crossing Portuguese Angola, reached the Congo also and joined the line from Katanga. Finally, in 1925, Belgium was for the first time connected with the Congo by air.

At the same time important scientific and humanitarian institutions were created which strengthened the work already achieved in Africa.



Such was the Congo on the eve of the world-wide depression. It was a modernized country that exported, by means of an ever-growing network of communications, the products of its plantations and the rich raw materials obtained from its mines. Peace reigned and the living conditions of the inhabitants were constantly improving.

The depression menaced the very existence of most of the mining and agricultural enterprises. The government had to take liberal measures of financial aid in order to mitigate the catastrophe. But at this moment of imminent disaster, important initiatives continued to be undertaken. Indeed, it was at this very time that the traditional native communities as well as new population centers were organized on sound bases. It was also at this time that increased medical aid was given to the native population. Especially noteworthy was the Queen Elizabeth Fund established to give medical aid to the natives. Furthermore, the future King Leopold III, who had just returned from a journey to the Congo — in 1933 — made an important speech. Its subject was twofold: putting Congolese agriculture in the hands of the native peasantry and preparing the natives to become real estate owners in a more or less distant future. These aims still inspire the policy of Belgium toward the Congo. In addition, important organizations for scientific research were created at this time: the Institute of National Parks which established vast reserves for the protection of the flora and fauna of the Colony, and the National Institute for the Agronomical Study of the Belgian Congo whose aim was the scientific development of agriculture.

When the depression was over, the Congo slowly regained its prosperity, which continued until the war. Mining and agricultural production again increased, communications were consolidated, and Belgium took a more and more important part in commercial exchanges.

In fact, at the time World War II began, the colony's balance sheet showed an appreciable surplus. The Congo had come

through the depression with flying colors and its economic position was getting stronger. The entire country was criss-crossed with networks of rivers, roads, and railroads, linking and prolonging each other from one frontier to another. Air communications were being established. Schools, hospitals, and dispensaries were multiplying, while the first cities were taking shape. Finally, a flexible body of laws guaranteed at one and the same time the protection of native communities remaining faithful to their traditional organization, that of workers engaged in new ways of life, and also that of the first centers where urban life was coming into existence. This was a varied and expedient policy, resting simultaneously on tradition and on evolution. It has turned out well and has assured an era of peace and tranquillity that has never been seriously disturbed.

This favorable situation enabled the Congo to be equipped for the exceptional effort that was later required of it in the course of World War II.

## E.

### World War II (1940-1945).

The Congo's participation in World War I had been military above all. In World War II, its participation was total: it contributed the wealth of its mines, plantations and forests; the tireless activity of its population — both white and black; its soldiers and its weapons.

On May, 10, 1940, the invasion of Belgium by the Germans had suddenly cut off all relations between the Congo and the Mother Country. However, at that moment the Congolese frontiers were not directly menaced, the nearest enemy being the Italian troops of East Africa. But, conscious of the gravity of the

situation, Governor General Ryckmans, as early as May 18, deliberately placed the Congo at the side of the Allies who were continuing the struggle.

During these years, military and civilian mobilization changed the face of the country.

After a period of concentration the Congolese troops crossed the frontiers in February 1941 and attacked the Italian centers in Abyssinia. Co-operating with the British command, a battalion which had covered over a thousand miles across the burning plains of the Sudan won the victories of Asosa and Gambela ; other elements followed and went up the line.

At this moment the Italians, hard-pressed on the east by the English, were pushed toward the positions held by the Belgians in the region of Saïo ; it was there that they met defeat. Indeed, under the command of General Gilliaert and Colonel Dronkers-Martens, the Congolese troops besieged Saïo and stormed the place. On July 3 Saïo fell. An Italian army of nine generals, about four hundred officers, over two thousand five hundred non-commissioned officers and soldiers, and over three thousand five hundred auxiliaries surrendered to the Belgians. This crushing victory led to the surrender of all the Italian troops stationed south of the Blue Nile.

A few months later new Belgian effectives embarked at Matadi. A complete expeditionary corps was to take up a waiting position in British Nigeria at the frontier of Dahomey, which was under Vichy control. In principle, it was to take its place in a vast manoeuvre aimed at encircling the French colonies that had not yet gone over to the Allied camp. However, the acceleration of events, the landing in North Africa, the winning over of Dakar which entailed that of the neighboring territories, soon rendered needless the intervention of this expeditionary corps. At the beginning of 1943 the Congolese troops left Nigeria. Partly

by sea and partly by land, they reached the Middle East. Six thousand soldiers skirted Africa by sea, while a convoy of more than a thousand vehicles, in a spectacular dash that was a veritable sporting exploit, crossed the Sudanese deserts and reached Khartoum, and from there Cairo.

The effectives of two brigades remained in the Middle East for nearly two years. In Egypt and Palestine they relieved troops that were ready for combat duty and performed important missions in the way of guard duty and surveillance. Secret plans provided for their possible participation in a Balkan campaign, but there, too, events moved rapidly. The Italian offensive and the landing in Normandy created new situations. Their mission fulfilled, the Congolese troops were repatriated without having seen the battlefields of Europe.

However, even in the Far East the Congolese soldiers made their appearance during the war. As a matter of fact, under the command of Medical Officer Thomas, a field hospital brought from the Congo gave the Allies constant co-operation on the East African fronts, at the landing in Madagascar, and finally, at the height of the war with Japan, in the Burmese jungle where it covered itself with glory.

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While the military forces of the Congo were crossing the frontiers in successive waves to reach their objectives, work was going on full blast within the country. Its entire productive capacity was devoted to the war effort. Gold, tin, cobalt, tungsten, copal, palm oil, and rubber were put at the disposal of the Allies. In all sectors of the Colony's economic life there was but one aim : to throw into the battle all its wealth ; to supply ceaselessly all the factories beyond the seas which were furnishing matériel, food, and munitions to the combatants ; and to make up for all the shortages caused by the loss of those countries of the Far East that had fallen into the hands of the Japanese and from which oil and rubber had previously come.



But at the same time, as a consequence of the situation, new phenomena made their appearance within the Congo. The interruption in economic relations with Belgium had changed the course of business. On the one hand, imports were relying on new sources, especially on America, which was getting a foothold in the Congolese market and was discovering the potentialities of Africa. On the other hand, the Congo's industrial structure itself was undergoing a change. Until then the Congo had been above all a supplier of raw materials and a purchaser of manufactured goods; now it was beginning to set up its own factories and meet the needs of its home market. An awareness of its possibilities and of its place in the world was being born and becoming stronger.

Simultaneously, on the social level, another kind of awareness was coming to light. The worker, white or black, was beginning to assert his rights, and labor unions were being organized. This could not take place without clashes and unrest. The same thing happens in all the countries of the world when social classes are being formed. In a country which until then had lived in accordance with a strictly colonial pattern, the dawn of democracy was now being witnessed.

A more important fact was that at the same time, especially in the urban centers, the hold of the clans on the natives was being broken and individualism was being born among the Congolese. Furthermore, all this was accompanied by the formation of a young native elite just out of school. The effort that had been demanded of this young elite with the aid of vigorous propaganda had made the Congolese understand that they were a great deal more than mere cells embedded in the collectivity of the native clans; that they were indeed above all individuals whose actions could have repercussions extending to the ends of the earth, individuals that the « free world » had needed to win the war. This feeling, still confused and embryonic in rural areas, was getting stronger and stronger in the cities where youth, coming from different regions, was beginning to compare experiences and opinions.

At the time the war ended there was thus a profound evolution in gestation. It was paving the way for the post-war Congo, a Congo with a new face, sure of itself, strong in material wealth and eager to play its part in a universe that had itself undergone a profound change in the course of a few years. Starting from authoritarianism and having reached the stage where paternalism could be relaxed, too young and also too heterogeneous in its makeup to throw itself deliberately and completely into a democratic way of life, it was now an adolescent country ready to embark on adult life. The World War had opened a new era for it in every field.

## F.

### Progress and Problems of the Congo after World War II

After the cessation of hostilities, the Congo entered a period of propitious circumstances marked by a steady increase in exports, very sound financial conditions, and great progress in public and private investments.

Some figures illustrate the Colony's progress and prosperity. The value of the Congo's exports, which had been two and a quarter billion francs in 1938, on the eve of the war, increased to ten billion in 1948 and twenty-seven billion in 1956. This was a tenfold increase in less than twenty years. The budgetary receipts which had amounted to 826 million francs in 1937 rose to twelve billion by the end of the same period. Furthermore, disbursements in the course of the past few years have been lower than receipts, resulting in a series of accumulated surpluses: this situation lasted until the middle of 1907 at which time the effects of the world-wide depression were felt in the Congo.

Doubtless the prosperity of the Congolese economy is still based essentially on exports, but the structure of this economy

has become sounder. The country has reached the stage of systematic and scientific exploitation of its natural wealth, working methods have been modernized, more and more factories have been built, and domestic trade has been developed. Finally, a great many Belgian industries have understood the needs that arose out of this evolution and, taking advantage of local conditions, have created in the Congo new outlets which have increased their field of activity.

The decision, after prolonged study, to utilize the immense hydro-electric resources of the Congo River in the region of Inga marked a new economic step forward. The production of the first kilowatt from Inga, expected in 1964, will be at least as important for the Colony as the stage marked by the laying of the first railroad or the casting of the first ingot of copper.

In addition to this decision to exploit the potential of electric energy which will permit vast industrialization, the most important event in the economic domain was unquestionably the conception and realization of the Ten Year Plan. The latter, through large investments, has brought about an improvement in the economic substructure. When this plan comes to an end, it is expected to be followed up by a new plan centered on developing the productivity of the home market, which is an element of stability. This will be plainly a long-term task, based at one and the same time on a sense of reality and broad vision.

Hand in hand with this economic progress, a rise in the standard of living can be noticed; there is a definite improvement in the personal and social status of the natives.

As a result of the Ten Year Plan the country has become so well equipped with hospital services that today most of the leading cities have a modern medico-surgical center supplemented by dispensaries in the rural areas. Education, starting from the most rudimentary level, has rapidly gone beyond the secondary

stage and has reached the upper level; in the years following the war the first Congolese universities were opened. With the gradual development of education, new generations ready to play a more and more important part in the modern organization of the country have come to the fore.

The country itself has undergone a sort of internal cleavage which has divided its population, until recently entirely rural and faithful to the customs of the clans, into two groups, one rural, the other urban. For both of these groups it has been necessary to consider measures calculated to assure their well-being while taking into account their different mentalities.

The great mass of the Congolese population has remained entirely rural. In order to stabilize it and prevent it from drifting into the urban centers or the factories, welfare measures have been undertaken. A « Native Welfare Fund » endowed with resources amounting to three billion francs has been established; it operates exclusively in the native centers. At the same time, policies concerning themselves with the peasantry and the agricultural co-operatives have been initiated. They tend to improve the standard of living of the peasantry and to create an atmosphere favorable to the maintenance of the rural communities by giving them better living conditions.

On the other hand, more than three million natives — a quarter of the population — have flocked to the centers. This multitude of uprooted people have entered upon a new and absolutely different path which is becoming more and more westernized. Here also appropriate measures have been considered. New houses have been built by the thousands, social institutions have been created, the worker's security has been organized, and a system of pensions introduced and generalized.

But the problems of the present-day Congo are not limited to this phenomenon of the urbanization of a part of the rural



masses. The Congo of today, thanks to an awareness born of the war, is beginning to ask questions about the democratic way of life. To these first questions the first answers have already been given. Measures of decentralization and deconcentration have been taken to render more flexible the functioning of the administrative machine; the right of workers to form labor unions and the rights of these unions have finally been recognized; and a first step toward a democratic regime has been taken by giving the Congolese cities and native communities a statute resembling the Belgian communal institutions.

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The Congo is thus gradually ceasing to be a colony and is becoming a country.

What will the Congo be like in the future? It is premature to venture a forecast because too many dynamic forces are still in the making, too many essential factors have just begun to take shape, and too many imponderables may still intervene. But the entire policy of the government is leading the country in the direction of a Belgo-Congolese community free from racial discrimination.

The absence of racial discrimination is a principle that has been stressed many times in the speeches of the Belgian ministers and of the governors general. This is not just a matter of empty words: legal measures and regulations have implemented the principle. Thus, since many years, by a procedure of registration the Congolese who have reached an adequate level of education are granted the same rights provided for in the written civil laws governing Europeans: furthermore, an interracial character has been given to education even as far as the university, where today students of all color and all origin mix. Recently a new bill still further enforced this policy of Belgium by decreeing that any act of racism manifesting not only racial and tribal hatred, but even mere aversion, would be punishable by one to three years of imprisonment.

Only the collaboration of groups — white and black — in a complete equality of rights can permit the realization of the desired Belgo-Congolese community. The development of Belgium's work in the Congo leads directly to this democratic equality. Indeed, through the rise in the standard of living, the ever-increasing emphasis placed on education, and the introduction of material and intellectual wealth, the work accomplished has permitted the natives to occupy more and more important places in society, to such an extent that already some of them can claim the right to assume duties and posts formerly held by their civilizers. The rôle of the universities in the formation of a local « *intelligentia* » will be of first importance in this respect. Right now this raises the question of replacing Belgians by natives, and also a problem of integration.

It is this problem of integration — the integration of new individuals and new classes of different origins — that the Congo faces today. The manner in which it will be solved, at the very moment when Africa is awakening, will decide what direction the next phase of the Congo's history will take.

**PART III**  
**BASIC**  
**ORGANIZATION**



CHAPTER I  
**POLITICAL AND  
ADMINISTRATIVE  
INSTITUTIONS**

## SUMMARY

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### NOTE OF THE PUBLISHERS.

THIS BOOK WAS ALREADY IN THE PRESS WHEN THE BELGIAN CONGO'S IMPORTANT POLITICAL REFORMS WENT INTO EFFECT. THESE REFORMS WILL BE EXPLAINED IN VOLUME 2.

## 1.

# The Congo and International Law.

## A.

### The International Status of the Congo.

From 1885 to 1908, the Congo was linked with Belgium through the person of King Leopold II, who was thus the ruler of both countries.

From then on, the Congo was bound by a series of international obligations. No sooner had the leading European powers recognized the sovereignty of the territory in its original form of the Association Internationale du Congo (International Association of the Congo), when it participated as a co-signatory in the General Act of Berlin and endorsed, together with the other countries occupying the conventional basin of the Congo, a series of agreements: humanitarian agreements to suppress slavery and improve the moral and material condition of the blacks; commercial agreements guaranteeing free trade and forbidding monopolies and privileges (1).

(1) See Part 2: « A History of the Congo », Chapter III: « The Congo in Our Time ». — « Creation of the Congo Free State ».



At the time when, by the Law of 1908, Belgium assumed sovereignty over the territories comprising the Congo Free State, intimate ties were created between the mother country and the Congo ; henceforth the two formed one and the same state.

Exercising the full sovereignty bestowed upon her over the African territories by the Law of 1908, Belgium declared that it was assuming and making its own the obligations of the former Congo Free State. This involved, in the domain of international law, a continuation of the obligations born of the General Act of Berlin. The latter had meanwhile been modified in commercial matters by the Conference of Brussels of 1889 (1). These obligations, transferred to Belgium on October 18, 1908, were for the most part enumerated in the Colonial Charter, the basic law of the Belgian Congo.

In 1919, after World War I, the Convention of Saint-Germain-en-Laye modified both the General Act of Berlin and the Act of Brussels. These modifications concern chiefly the conditions under which countries could benefit by free trade in the Congo basin, reserving this right to the countries that were signatories of the Convention and authorizing Belgium to fix customs duties as she saw fit. But, on the whole, the basic principles of the régime set up by the Act of Berlin were maintained ; they remain in full force today, whether with regard to freedom of navigation, free trade, or to the great humanitarian ideas on which Belgium's work in Africa was based.

New international obligations were contracted by Belgium at the end of World War I when, by the Law of December 14, 1945, she ratified the Charter of the United Nations. Chapter XI of that Charter contains notably a declaration relating to non-autonomous territories which applies to the Congo. By this declaration the members of the United Nations recognize the principle according to which the inhabitants of these territories should have

(1) See *ibidem*.

priority ; furthermore, the members assume humanitarian obligations to which Belgium had already subscribed in other terms half a century ago when the Congo Free State came to an end. Moreover, these nations —and therefore Belgium — undertake to foster the ability of the non-autonomous populations to govern themselves, and promise to take into account the political aspirations of these populations and help them in the gradual development of their free institutions within the limits appropriate to the special conditions prevailing in each territory with respect to the particular stage of evolution reached by its population.

Besides, the members of the United Nations are to furnish regularly to the Secretary-General — by way of information and with due regard to considerations of security and constitutional order — statistical information and other data of a technical nature relating to economic and social conditions and also to educational progress in the territories for which they are respectively responsible with the exception of territories under trusteeship subject to other arrangements.

Such are — in addition to the numerous agreements concerning special matters — the fundamental international obligations to which Belgium has subscribed in the full exercise of her sovereignty over Congolese territory.

## B.

### The Legal Status of the Inhabitants.

The question of a possible Congolese nationality was the subject of heated debate for a long time. The origin of this controversy was the maintenance in the civil code of the Congo, after its attachment to Belgium, of provisions relating to the acquisition of Congolese nationality, provisions taken over from a law of the Congo Free State dating from 1892.

Today this controversy has died out and it is the unanimous opinion that Congolese nationality no longer exists. However, numerous legal texts use the term « Congolais » (Congolese). How can this term be interpreted ?

It is not a question of a nationality, but of a special status. Since the Belgian Constitution provides that the Congo can be governed according to special laws, it can be said that the Congolese are Belgians enjoying a special status : in other words, what distinguishes the Belgians living in the mother country from the Congolese is that the latter are Belgians with a Congolese status. Such is the meaning now given to the word « Congolese ».

But what are these Congolese ?

Most of them are natives — and only those born in the Congo of native parents are recognized by law as natives. To these are added children found on Congolese soil or born of legally unknown parents. Besides, non-natives who were naturalized during the lifetime of the Congo Free State are also considered Congolese ; but this category is insignificant, since there were only two such cases.

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Within the country, the main points in the status of the Congo's inhabitants are as follows :

All the inhabitants enjoy the public rights recognized by the Colonial Charter, which contains various articles copied from the Belgian Constitution. These rights are : freedom of the individual, freedom of worship, the right to an education, freedom of opinion, freedom to seek employment, the inviolability of the home, the protection of property, the right to petition, freedom from censorship of correspondence, etc. ; in short, the great public rights

recognized by modern democracies. As for the press, no steps can be taken against it that are not in conformity with the legal provisions governing it (1).

In regard to civil rights — viz., rights concerning persons and relations established between them — a written statute fully guarantees these to Belgians from the mother country and to foreigners who have settled in the Congo. The personal status of the latter is determined by their own national laws insofar as these are not contrary to public order. The native population is ruled, according to the extent of its evolution, either by the written statute or by a native statute ; the degree of evolution that permits the natives to be placed under the written statute is officially recognized in the course of a special procedure : « immatriculation » (registration). Every Congolese has the right to be registered as soon as he has attained his majority according to the Civil Code, if he can show by his training and his way of living that he has reached a stage of civilization that proves him fit to enjoy the rights and fulfill the duties stipulated in the written legislation. It must be emphasized that registration does not create a way of life but merely certifies that the person registered has already acquired a way of life which will enable him to conform to the written law from a civil and commercial point of view.

In regard to duties toward the community, the penal code as well as the police and security regulations apply to all the inhabitants of the Congo ; but the natives living in their native milieu are in addition governed by their customs and traditions with regard to infractions not provided for by the written law or when the public prosecuting attorney deems it preferable to refer the matter to the native judge.

Such are the broad outlines of the status of the Congo's inhabitants.

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(1) See, in regard to regulations concerning the press, Part 5, Chapter VI : « Cultural Life ».



## 2. The Government of the Congo.

In the system of government prevailing in the Congo, we find the classical conception of the division of powers in three branches : legislative, executive, and judicial.

In conformity with the provisions of the Belgian Constitution — which specifies that any colonies, overseas possessions, or protectorates that Belgium may acquire will be governed in accordance with special laws — the Law of October 18, 1908, called the Colonial Charter, organized these powers and their operation by giving them a character peculiar to the Congo, and sometimes rather different from the system found in the mother country.

## A. The Legislative Power.

### Laws

The Belgian Parliament is the supreme legislator for the Congo. The laws voted by the Parliament are final, and there is no appeal from them. The Colonial Charter provides that every law, from the moment it is made public, has the effect of abrogating without further consideration any provisions of decrees that are contrary to it. The Charter also stipulates that courts and tribunals may apply decrees only insofar as they are not contrary to the laws.

It must be pointed out that certain matters are reserved by the Colonial Charter to the jurisdiction of the Parliament : budgets of receipts and disbursements, general accounts, loans, etc. ; but, on the whole, the Parliament has rarely intervened in purely legislative matters ; in this it has carried out the intentions of the Belgian Constituent Assembly.

### Decrees

Indeed, the decrees — although subordinate to the laws in principle — have constituted the backbone of Congolese legislation.

A decree is an act of the King functioning as a legislator. The Colonial Charter has delegated to the King — who, in the mother country, shares in the legislative power — the right to take, for overseas territories, measures which in Belgium would have to be the subject of a law. The King is therefore the colonial legislator par excellence. He cannot delegate his power.

When acting in the capacity of legislator, the King does not escape the constitutional rule which requires the ministerial countersignature for each of his acts.

Furthermore, he is assisted in the exercise of this important function by an advisory body, the Colonial Council, whose seat is in Belgium. The Colonial Council, presided over by the minister of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, is made up of fourteen members, eight of them named by the King, three elected by the Senate, and three by the Chamber of Representatives. Its chief mission is to give its opinion — except when action is urgent — on every bill proposing a decree.

When action is urgent, decrees are submitted to the Council within ten days after being issued. The minister of the colonies must, in this case, explain why action was urgent, and the Colonial Council may express its comments in a report published within a month from the day the decree was issued. However, such decrees have been rare. Inasmuch as the legislative body failed to specify what it meant by « urgency », the government itself has established a judicial principle which gives a rather restrictive sense to the idea of urgency. Thus, between 1919 and 1932, out of several hundred decrees, only twenty-four were treated as urgent; between 1933 and 1957, in spite of the immense increase in the volume of legislation, barely thirty-seven have followed this exceptional procedure.

In addition to the intervention of the Colonial Council, the King is furthermore obliged — this time because of rules that are in force — to consult other government agencies. Thus it happens that every bill proposing a decree which constitutes general and permanent legislation must be submitted either to the Government Council in Leopoldville or to its permanent delegation in Brussels. Besides, all proposed decrees, whatever they are, must be submitted to the governor general for his advice.

Thus we note that the acts of the King in his legislative capacity are submitted to the minister of the Congo and Ruanda-

Urundi for his countersignature and to three consultative bodies : the Government Council of the Belgian Congo if the acts are of a general and permanent nature ; the governor general and the Colonial Council in all cases. This system, because of the experience and knowledge of African questions possessed by the bodies consulted, affords a guarantee of competence in the exercise of the royal prerogative.

## Ordinance-Laws

For his part, the governor general possesses, according to the terms of the Colonial Charter, a certain amount of law-making power ; but it is strictly limited to urgent cases and cannot affect existing laws, which fully retain their sovereign power.

With these reservations, the governor general may temporarily suspend decrees and issue ordinances having the force of law ; these ordinances will have a validity limited to six months, unless a new decree approves them. Their validity may be restricted to a part of the territory.

## Custom (Unwritten Law)

Side by side with this body of written law, custom remains a very vigorous legislative source in the Congo. Indeed, every year the native tribunals hand down no fewer than four hundred thousand decisions. However, the authority of custom is limited : on the one hand, custom applies only to those natives who have not been registered, and on the other, it has validity only insofar as it is not contrary either to public order or to written law. Nevertheless, it rules most aspects of the lives of numerous inhabitants of the Congo.



## B. The Executive Power.

By virtue of the provisions of the Colonial Charter, the King possesses the executive power that permits him to make rules and regulations necessary for the execution of laws and decrees.

Here again a difference appears between government in the Congo and in Belgium. Indeed, in Belgium, the extent of the royal executive power is determined by the Constitution, while in the Congo it is determined by the Colonial Charter which, it must be recalled, is merely a legislative act. The result is that Parliament, the sovereign lawmaker, may at any moment rightfully intervene in the matter and modify by a new law the power that has been granted.

The King may delegate the exercise of this executive power, but only at certain levels and for certain matters.

Thus, he cannot delegate the special powers granted to him by the Colonial Charter, especially in budgetary, financial, and monetary matters. Neither can he delegate certain powers which, according to the general opinion, are of such a nature that any delegation of them is out of the question such are the pardon power and the right to conclude international treaties.

Moreover, the King can delegate the executive power only to persons and to organized bodies that are officially subordinate to him. The persons to whom such power is delegated are the minister of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, the governor general, and the provincial governors.

The minister of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi therefore also exercises the executive power, but only to the extent that it has been delegated to him by a royal decree or directive.

Moreover, it is his rôle to countersign the King's acts relating to the Congo ; only in case of his absence or inability to sign could another minister legally countersign the acts of the King. This is a function which is in a way peculiar to the minister of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. However, in the matter of foreign policies, this function is not within the province of the minister of the colonies ; it devolves upon the minister of foreign affairs. Indeed, since the Congo and the mother country form one state, it is indispensable that complete unity should be maintained in their relations with other countries.

The governor general also shares in the exercise of the executive power.

He is the King's representative in the Congo. The Colonial Charter authorizes him to exercise through ordinances the executive power that the King delegates to him. It is evident that the King can limit or modify this delegated power ; but, in the absence of any stipulation to the contrary, the governor general is authorized, in the spirit of the provisions of the Charter, to exercise — without let or hindrance — the executive power by means of ordinances.

As for the governors of the provinces who represent the governor general in their circumscriptions, they exercise the executive power through regulations within the limits of administrative ordinances. This delegation of authority has been given them by means of a decree of the Regent, dated July 1, 1947.

Finally, on a subordinate level, the district commissioners and their deputies, the territorial administrators together with their assistants — all see to it that the decisions of the executive power are carried out.

## C.

### The Council of State.

The Belgian Council of State was created fairly recently. In fact, it was instituted by the Law of December 23, 1946. It is a high administrative body whose jurisdiction extends to Belgium, to the Congo, and to the territories under trusteeship.

It is divided into two sections, each concerning itself with a clearly defined activity: the legislative and the administrative section.

The rôle of the legislative section is to assist the government in the drawing up of legal texts.

In Belgium, except for budgetary laws, the ministers must submit to the legislative section of the Council of State for its well considered opinion the texts of all its preliminary drafts of laws. The ministers may likewise ask for an opinion on every proposed law or decree; this jurisdiction of the legislative section extends to any proposed action concerning both organic laws or simple regulations. But the opinion given does not concern either the substance or the expediency of the texts. The legislative section of the Council of State limits its action to examining the drafting, the terminology employed, and possibly the conformity of the texts with existing legislation or rules; as far as the acts of the executive are concerned, it pays particular attention to their legality.

In the Congo, the situation is different. The colonial legislator is not obliged to submit to the legislative section of the Council of State, for its opinion, any proposed decrees, or legislative ordinances, or measures for carrying them into effect, whether these measures have been decided upon by the authorities of the mother country or by those of the Congo. However, the statutes of the Council provide that the colonial authorities

may request its opinion on action proposed to carry out decrees — both royal and ministerial — whether they concern organic laws or simple regulations.

As for the administrative section of the Council of State, it is a court for settling claims concerning administrative matters. It is vested with the power to annul decisions of the executive if it deems them to be vitiated by illegal exercise of power or if it believes that they constitute misuse of authority. Thus it protects the individual against possible arbitrary acts on the part of the authorities. All inhabitants — without distinction of origin — of Belgium, the Belgian Congo, or Ruanda-Urundi have the right to claim this protection.

## D.

### The Judicial Power.

The principle of the separation of powers, recognized in Belgium by the Constitution, has been applied to the Congo; as in Belgium, the judicial power in the Congo is independent of the executive power, being exercised in the name of the King by the courts and tribunals with the Court of Appeal of Belgium as the last resort.

The Colonial Charter itself establishes the prerogatives of the judicial power. Thus it stipulates that the administrative authority can neither prevent, stop, nor suspend the action of the courts and tribunals. Furthermore, it gives to the courts and tribunals the right to enforce the acts of the executive — whether rules or regulations — only insofar as they conform to the laws and decrees. It even determines the careers of magistrates by taking certain special measures, particularly in such matters as transfers, suspensions, and removals.



This determination to preserve the independence of the magistracy was manifested for a long time by special measures taken with regard to the officers of the « Ministère Public » (Body of prosecuting magistrates) in their capacity of agents of the executive power. Thus until 1921, these officers — who were under the authority of the minister of the colonies — were not responsible to the governor general, but to the « procureur général » (high-ranking public prosecuting attorney) who in this matter represented the minister of the colonies. However, the exaggerated nature of such precautionary measures soon became evident, and today the magistrates of the « Ministère Public » are responsible to the governor general, representing in this capacity the minister of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. (1)

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(1) See the following chapter : « The Judicial Organization ».

### 3.

## **Administrative Institutions.**

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The administration of the Congo is carried on by a double network of institutions, some of them located in Belgium, within the Ministry of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, the others functioning in Africa and grouped under the authority of the governor general.

### A.

## **The Administration in Belgium.**

Similar in its organization to the other Belgian ministries, the Ministry of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi nevertheless differs from them in the much vaster field that falls within its province ; indeed, it exercises in regard to the Congo the sum total of the executive activities which, in Belgium itself, are shared by all the other ministries. In consideration of this much vaster field of action, the bureaus of the Ministry of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi have at their head an official — the administrator general — who possesses much more extensive powers and authority than his colleagues, the secretaries-general of the other ministries.

Furthermore, the Ministry of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi differs from the other Belgian ministries in its functions. Whereas the latter are instruments of conception, control, and execution, the former's activities are limited to conception and control, execution being the function of the administration in the Congo. (1)

This difference in powers is noticeable also in the title given and the functions attributed to five out of the six high officials who direct the six bureaux comprising the Ministry of the Colonies. Indeed, they have the title of « royal inspector » and, in addition to their duties as directors general, they are vested with missions of inspection in Africa.

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The six bureaux of the Ministry of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi deal with all the questions which — in Belgium itself — are divided among the various ministries.

Thus, the first bureau takes care of political, administrative, judicial, and medical questions. Assisted by the administration in Africa, it plays the rôle of technical counselor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the latter retaining among its functions that of the external relations of Belgium with the Congo. Moreover, in respect to the penal code, the judicial organization, and the administration of the Congolese magistracy, it exercises the functions of the Ministry of Justice in Belgium. To this it adds the functions of the Ministry of the Interior for everything concerning political institutions in the Colony, and assumes the responsibilities of the Ministry of Public Health by organizing preventive and curative medicine in a country of some 13 million inhabitants.

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(1) As a matter of fact, the administration in the Congo is not limited to executive activity. It should not be confused, in this respect, with bureaux of the national ministries that might be set up in Belgium outside the capital. In addition to its executive rôle, it has also — within the sphere of the executive power delegated to the authorities of the Congo by the Colonial Charter — the prerogatives of conception and control.

This simple example shows the immense field of action covered by the Ministry of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi inasmuch as a single one of its bureaux can assume duties so heterogeneous in character and so far-spreading. The situation is the same for the second, third, and fourth bureaux which take in functions as varied as education, worship, foundations, social aid, native politics, public works, labor and state insurance, agriculture, commerce, the middle classes, the mines, the « Colonat », etc.

Only the fifth and sixth bureaux are homogeneous in character: one concerns itself with financial matters, ranging from loans and taxes to customs duties; the other deals with administrative services, pensions for the personnel in Africa, and the status of the personnel of the Congo and of the mother country.

## B.

### The Administration in the Congo.

The Administration in the Congo comprises two branches, both under the authority of the governor general: the central administration — or general government — which has its headquarters in Leopoldville, and the administration of the provinces.

The present organization functions in accordance with two decrees: a decree issued by the Regent dated July 1, 1947 and later modified several times, and a royal decree of February 13, 1957. These decrees were issued in order to adapt the administration to the new tasks created by the rapid evolution of the country. They have created a co-ordinated whole, in which it is easy to supply those who execute the laws with adequate conditions and equipment; besides, deconcentration is favored by putting at the disposal of the local authorities the necessary administrative means.

The central administration comprises, aside from the services of the Ten Year Plan, eight bureaux whose activities are co-or-



minated by a secretary-general. The functions of these bureaus require a higher degree of specialization than is found in the services of the mother country: the first bureau deals with political, administrative, judicial, and religious matters; the second, with native and social affairs, and with information; the third is concerned with finance; the fourth, with economic affairs; the fifth, with agronomy, the « Colonat » and veterinary service; the sixth, with public works and communication; the seventh, with medical services; and the eighth, with education.

With the assistance of the directors general, the governor general handles outstanding business and keeps control over the administration of the provinces.

The Congo is divided into six provinces. The administration of each of these is placed in charge of a governor assisted by two provincial commissioners.

The administration of a province comprises, in the capital of the province, a group of eight provincial services co-ordinated by a provincial secretary; on the whole they correspond to the eight bureaus of the central administration, with the exception of the sixth. In fact, on the provincial level, postal, telephone and telegraph communications are not grouped, as at Leopoldville, with public works, but they constitute separate activities which are under the direct control of the corresponding bureau of the central administration.

The provinces are divided into districts administered by commissioners. The latter, placed under the direct authority of the provincial governors, have functions that involve making decisions and bearing responsibility. They are assisted in their tasks by one or more assistant district commissioners and, in everything that concerns agriculture and public works, the provincial governors put at their disposal itinerant technical advisers.

The districts are in their turn subdivided into territories; these are governed by territorial administrators under the control

of the district commissioners who put the necessary personnel at their disposal. (1)

The territory constitutes the last administrative cell: there ends the stimulus given by the higher authority, and from there instructions are issued to the population for the carrying out of government programs. The rôle of the territorial administrator is delicate and complex: he must at one and the same time assure the progressive development of the territory entrusted to him, favor the advance of civilization in it, facilitate relations between the administration and the people, and also the reciprocal relations between the two elements of the population — African and European. At the same time, keeping constantly in touch with the native chiefs, he must always be prepared to maintain and, if necessary, to restore their authority; finally, it is also his duty to safeguard and improve the existing institutions of the native populations. Indeed, it is the spirit, the enthusiasm, and the ceaseless activity of the territorial personnel that have given to the Congo of today its strength, cohesion, and stability. This personnel blazed the first trails through forests and marshes and is now guiding the first steps of the present generations in the path of democracy by fostering their apprenticeship in the new communal institutions.

(1) It is the King who determines the number, boundaries, names, and capitals of the provinces. The governor general exercises the same prerogatives in regard to the districts and the territories.

## 4. Political Institutions.

Today the Congo is definitely a country in a transitional period, coming out of the paternalistic stage that was necessary to its growth and approaching the first phases of a democratic organization in which political institutions consisting of elected representatives of the population will have full play.

This evolution has already begun. It expresses itself on the one hand by a group of advisory bodies, themselves in constant evolution, and on the other hand by the organization of the first communal institutions of the country, institutions that already exercise certain sovereign prerogatives in their field.

This progress toward democracy is the goal of Belgium's declared policy toward the Congolese territory. It is the result of the continuous and concerted transformation of existing institutions. The latter, while remaining in close contact with reality, have not ceased to adapt themselves to a changing society destined, by the express wishes of the authorities, to take the form of a Belgo-Congolese community made up of members equal in rights and free from all racial discrimination.

## A. Advisory Organizations.

At the various levels of conception and execution, the government of the Congo is assisted by the counsel of a group of advisory organizations: the Government Council and its Permanent Delegation, the provincial councils, and the territorial councils.

### The Government Council

As early as 1911, in its first form of « Advisory Committee », an organization was created whose duty it was to advise the governor general on the questions he submitted to it.

This organization, which has now become the « Government Council », has evolved very rapidly, not only in its composition, but also in the way it is chosen and in its jurisdiction. The evolution has been a reflection of the changing living conditions in the country.

At first it was made up chiefly of civil servants, but gradually private citizens have become a more and more important element in it.

Until very recently, the private members represented the great economic groups and the interests of the natives. Today this conception of representation has been changed and it rests upon the existence of « socio-economic » groups: these are business, the independent middle classes, salaried workers, notables, rural and advanced rural centers. All of these are bound to become integrated in the course of time, viz., to be composed of whites and blacks without discrimination, the latter having access to the business group as well as to that of the middle classes or that of salaried workers.



The Government Council comprises, aside from the governor general who presides over it, 65 members : among these, there are 11 high officials, 18 representatives of rural or advanced rural centers, and 9 representatives of each of the other 4 socio-economic groups.

How are the members of this council chosen ?

There has been a typical evolution here. At first all the members were chosen by the authorities. Today two-thirds of the private members are elected by the provincial councils, the remaining third are chosen by the governor general ; as for the high officials — who are definitely in a minority — they are members ex-officio.

There has been just as great an evolution in the Government Council's functions. It used to express opinions only on questions that the authorities saw fit to submit to it. Now it must be consulted in the last resort — except in urgent cases — before the Colonial Council on all proposed decrees constituting general and permanent legislation. Furthermore, whereas formerly it examined only budgetary propositions, it now considers ways and means and, in addition, it estimates proposed expenditures.

## The Permanent Delegation

The Permanent Delegation is a small body chosen by the Government Council from among its members (either elected or appointed), each member voting within his group.

Its aim is to associate the population more closely with the government of the country ; in this spirit, the permanent delegates have been invited by the governor general to communicate to him at any time of the year their views on important questions arising out of the evolution of the Colony and involving either theoretical or practical points. Furthermore, the Permanent Delegation deliberates on all the questions submitted to it by the governor general : it has the right not to proceed with a question submitted to it, referring it to the Government Council.

## Provincial Councils

Within every Congolese province there is an advisory body — the provincial council — whose function it is to communicate its views to the governor for his guidance.

The provincial councils have followed an evolution analogous to that of the Government Council. As in the case of the latter, the composition of the provincial council has changed, and its private members, along with the officials who are ex-officio members, henceforth represent integrated socio-economic groups. The members are appointed by the governor on the advice of associations representing the various interests of the province.

The jurisdiction of the provincial councils has also expanded : beginning with a mere inspection of budgetary proposals, it now considers ways and means and estimates the proposed expenditures of the province ; this is an important step toward a more extensive provincial autonomy.

## Territorial Councils

Until very recently, the territory was merely an administrative subdivision, established to facilitate the exercise of authority in a vast country ; the territorial administrators were simply agents who executed orders.

But now the first step has been taken on a new path that will lead to the transformation of this administrative subdivision into a political entity. This political entity would attempt to bring about on the lowest possible level the integration of the interests of native and non-native elements in the population, and thus pave the way for a partnership of all the inhabitants, black and white, in the local management of public affairs.

A royal decree of January 22, 1957 marked this first step by setting up territorial councils. At the present stage, as stipulated in the decree, these councils have merely an advisory jurisdiction in regard to questions of local interest submitted to them ; the

members are appointed by the administrative authority without consulting the population.

But this is only a transitory stage. The report to the King which accompanies the decree provides for two later stages, one of experimentation and the other of organization, in the course of which the jurisdiction of these councils and their composition will be clearly defined.

The creation of these territorial councils is an important act in the political evolution of the Congo. Indeed, it constitutes a first attempt to broaden the views of the rural population, an attempt to make the concerns of the villagers cross the limits of their villages or their tribal communities and extend as far as the boundaries of the territory. Consequently, this is an endeavor to create a new collective feeling. The importance of this experiment can be understood if it is pointed out that the average area or a territory is about two-thirds that of Belgium. What is being done there is an attempt to bring forth a new collective spirit.

## B.

### Communal Institutions.

#### Native Districts

As early as 1891, a decree recognized the existence of the tribal communities, thus integrating them officially into the Congo's system of government. In fact, these tribal communities were the usual form of organized society that the Europeans found on the spot when they first arrived in the Congo; whenever possible, it was through them, their institutions, and their chiefs that the Europeans associated the natives with the new administration.

The protection and evolution of these native districts have been a subject for constant thought on the part of legislators: 1910, 1931, 1933, 1934, and 1945 are so many dates when important legislative measures in this domain were passed. A

new decree — dated May 10, 1957 — marks the crowning of this long and exacting task. Overhauling all the older texts concerning the political and administrative organization of the native populations, this decree — together with the decree of March 26, 1957 on the organization of cities — may be considered the equivalent for the Congo of the communal law for Belgium.

The decree of May 10, 1957 sets forth a new and broader conception of the native district. Indeed, this decree defines it as an administrative entity made up of natives united not only by traditional relations, but also, in case of need, by local relations or common interests. The utility and flexibility of such a definition are evident: on the one hand, the existing tribal organization continues to be respected and is assured of its evolution within a framework that has become normalized; on the other hand, this definition allows for the recognition of new groups based, not on tradition, but on actual conditions — economic, social, or others.

After setting forth this new and broader idea of the native district, the decree defines its status, a status which, while organizing a sort of administrative guardianship, makes civil servants of the native authorities. Today the functions of the native chiefs are fairly similar to those of the burgomasters (mayors) of Belgium; organizations have even been created that suggest both the municipal councils and the administrative bodies of burgomasters and deputy-burgomasters of Belgian communes.

The new-type native district council is composed of ex-officio members and of members appointed with due consideration for the preferences of the inhabitants whatever their social class. It deliberates on all questions of local interest and on any other subject submitted to it by the authorities. This truly constitutes a sovereign power, but with the reservation that the tutelary authority may always intervene.

Among the functions of this council, the following should be mentioned: approval of the budget and of the annual accounting of receipts and expenditures, the drawing up of rules relating to local taxes, operations concerning the real estate traditionally



owned by the native district, planning of the local road system, deliberating on candidacies for certain posts such as those of secretary, tax collectors, etc.

Furthermore, a permanent administrative body composed of members appointed on the recommendation of the Council assists the native chief in his daily work. Under his chairmanship, the administrative body publishes and executes the resolutions of the Council and administers the district as the burgomasters and their deputies in Belgium would do.

These administrative bodies are therefore communal institutions in their first phases. It must however not be inferred that there has been a mere servile copying of Belgian communal institutions. If the legislator was inspired by factors he knew well through personal experience, it was only because they were particularly adapted to the social and political structure of the immense Congolese territory with its numerous divisions into tribal cells. But the varying degrees of evolution of the populations in question, and the very extent of the country, will always require administrative differences. Moreover, the aim pursued is not to import European institutions bodily, but to make the entire population — starting from the basic political cells — progress in the direction of a capacity for self-government.

## Cities

More typical still of the evolution of the country toward a democratic formula based on a Belgo-Congolese community is the statute of the cities.

The city, in the Congo, is a phenomenon imported by Europeans. Because of certain factors — industrial progress, administrative and commercial equipment — many Europeans had gathered together in centers that were, so to speak, created out of nothing; such was the case of Leopoldville, Elisabethville, Jadotville. Little by little, a feeling for the community had developed, based both on living in the same place and sharing the same interests. From that moment on, these Europeans,

remembering the municipal institutions they had known, expressed the desire to participate in the administration of the city. That was a natural sentiment; it inspired the texts which created the Congolese cities as early as 1923. At that time, the latter were exclusively European; even if they spread out beyond their limits, they did not absorb the African communities of the vicinity.

But, at the same time as this urban phenomenon was taking concrete form, the natives were clustering in ever increasing numbers around the European centers, attracted both by the possibilities of finding work and the lure of a new way of city life. It was no longer a question of native communities but of a constantly growing mass of people flocking from every direction, ruled by different tribal customs and confronted with a civilization that was new in every way. This state of affairs called for appropriate measures; the legislators took them by creating — as early as 1931 — the «centres extra-coutumiers» (1) that were to be governed for a long time by a royal decree of 1934 co-ordinating previous decrees.

This sociological phenomenon — illustrating from the very beginning two different situations and two different conceptions of the collectivity — was to give rise to the creation of the cities of today where both Africans and Europeans mingle.

Soon, indeed, a symbiosis occurred between white and black agglomerations, between cities and the native communities surrounding them. This symbiosis was taking place, not only because of working relations but also through commercial exchanges and social contacts. Moreover, it represented the spirit of Belgian policies in Africa, a spirit that rejects all racial discrimination; and it was accelerated by the rapid evolution of the Congolese living in the cities. So much so that in the course of a few years the two original sociological phenomena merged into one marked by a strong tendency toward unification: the urban phenomenon. The legislative measures of 1923 and 1931 were then seen to be out of date; besides, they had come to take on an unintentional segregative character that aroused a great deal of criticism.

(1) «Centres extra-coutumiers» are officially recognized communities of natives who have left their various tribes to live and work elsewhere.

Faced by this situation, the authorities decided to integrate many Congolese in the administration of the large cities and, starting with 1948, a reform of the outdated municipal statute was decided upon and a thorough study of the question went on for eight years. Meanwhile, the situation continued to develop at an accelerated pace, and the time to work out and perfect the reform was not wasted; the delay prevented the application of measures that, through the force of events, would soon have become obsolete.

Finally, on March 26, 1957 the new decree organizing the Congolese cities was signed.

This was an important political measure. Indeed, this decree of 1957 introduces two new ideas into the Congo: the existence, now legally recognized, of «communes» (a group of them constituting a city), and the consultation of an electorate made up of Africans and Europeans with a view to constituting communal councils.

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What is the system like?

Any agglomeration can be raised to the status of a city by the governor general if its importance justifies such a step. This city is composed of communes each having a burgomaster at its head; at the head of the city itself there is a «chief burgomaster».

All the burgomasters are appointed by the governor of the province. The communal burgomasters are freely chosen from among the men competent to fill the position, while the chief burgomaster must necessarily be an agent of the African administration; all of them may have deputies.

The rôle of these burgomasters of the Congo is somewhat similar to the one they would play in Europe. They are at one and the same time chief magistrates of the city and agents of the central government, presidents of the municipal councils and

chiefs of police; they have the power to make police regulations and enforce them by imposing — when necessary — either fines or penal servitude.

The burgomasters are assisted on the city level by a city council, and on the communal level by a communal council.

The creation of these councils was the first attempt to hold elections on a municipal level in the Congo; this took place in the course of December 1957 in the cities existing at that time: Leopoldville, Elisabethville, Jadotville.

At the base of the administrative structure are the communal councils. In order to constitute these, the commune is divided into a number of circumscriptions equal to the desired number of communal counselors. The candidates must be sponsored by at least twenty persons and must have accepted the candidacy. The electorate comprises all the Belgians, whether from Belgium or the Congo, who have been residing in the city for at least six months, provided they have reached the age of twenty-five, are of the male sex, and have not been convicted of certain offenses. Each voter designates by name, in an envelope which he deposits in a sealed urn, the candidate of his choice. When the result is known, the chief burgomaster announces the names of the communal counselors (one for each circumscription).

As for the Municipal Council, it comprises three categories of members: ex-officio, appointed, and elected members. The ex-officio members are the communal burgomasters and the chief burgomaster. The appointed members are notables, representatives of certain suburban zones, and representatives of «socio-economic groups» such as business, salaried workers, and independent middle classes. As for the elected members of the Municipal Council, they represent the Communal Council and are chosen by its members; this is therefore a kind of «second-degree» election.

The governor general fixes the number of representatives of each category, but in any case the number of members elected



cannot be less than the total number of members appointed among the notables and the socio-economic groups. This precaution, while safeguarding the importance of electoral representation, makes it possible to do justice to the social and economic groups which, for many years to come, will go on playing a preponderant rôle in the development of the country.

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City Councils and Communal Councils have very extensive functions that involve the exercise of sovereign powers.

Not only can they deliberate and formulate requests on everything of either urban or communal interest, but they can also vote compensatory taxes and, within the limits set by the governor general, fiscal taxes.

Moreover, they examine budget bills, and they may amend them, but with the following reservations: any amendment involving an increase in expenditures must provide the ways and means necessary for raising the money; any amendment involving a decrease in receipts that might produce a deficit in the budget must provide a corresponding decrease in expenditures. The purpose of these reservations is obvious: in imposing them, the legislator wanted to instill in the members of these newly fledged institutions a sense of equilibrium and stability in the management of public money.

Congolese cities and communes have a civic personality. Therefore, they may own public and private property; they may enter into partnerships with each other, or with the Colony, or even with the native communities, in order to manage common interests.

They also benefit by certain financial privileges. Thus they receive the product of renting or selling public lands located on their territory, and they collect taxes on buildings and on vacant land situated within their limits.

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Taken all in all, this municipal organization — which is only in its infancy — suggests by its structure the communal organization of Belgium; however, there are rather important differences. For example, both the provincial governor and the chief burgomaster may delegate to the Municipal or Communal Councils respectively such of their powers as they see fit to delegate. This is an original procedure peculiar to the Congo and non-existent in the mother country; it makes the Congolese councils virtually more powerful than those of Belgium. Similarly, the prerogatives of a chief burgomaster in the Congo are clearly more extensive than those of a Belgian burgomaster, even of a large city; indeed, the Congolese chief burgomaster adds to his own functions those of the administrative bodies of burgomasters and their deputies in Belgium, and even certain powers which in the mother country are exercised by district commissioners and provincial governors.

In spite of these broad powers, the communal and urban authorities of the Congo remain subjected to a regime of guardianship which involves authorization and approval of their acts by the higher authorities of the country: this tutelage has been judged indispensable at a time when these institutions are still in the stage of apprenticeship.

But such as it is — with the extended powers it provides for and the precautions that surround the exercise of these powers — the decree of March 26, 1957, together with that on the native circumscriptions, supplies a basic frame for the Belgo-Congolese society of tomorrow. In organizing these basic political cells (the Municipal and Communal Councils), the decree paves the way for the democratic evolution of the country.

CHAPTER II  
**THE JUDICIAL  
ORGANIZATION**



## SUMMARY

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## 1. The System of Traditional Native Customs.

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In the native communities that the Europeans found on their first arrival in the Congo, there existed a native law that was not written down but was preserved by tradition and transmitted orally from generation to generation ; this law was applied by local courts that varied in character.

Desirous of respecting the existing African institutions, the Congo Free State legally acknowledged not only the tribal communities but also the traditional native law and the authority connected with it. A decree issued in 1906 definitely recognized, alongside written law, a traditional native law.

The native courts are still functioning. A royal decision of 1938 — co-ordinating various decrees the first of which dates from 1926 — regulates their present status. Their competence extends to all natives except those who, through the registration procedure, have freed themselves from the jurisdiction of the native courts and are now amenable to the provisions of written law. The activity of these courts is impressive ; it is estimated that they deliver some 400.000 judgments every year.

They apply customary law, ancient or modernized, insofar as it does not run counter to public order or to written law. In this domain, they are authorized to judge all native civil cases that do not involve the application of written law ; as far as punishments are concerned, they may impose on the natives penalties not exceeding imprisonment for one month and a fine of 1,000 francs ; this holds true not only in cases provided for by native law but also in certain others fixed by written law.

There exist three categories of native lower courts which are legally recognized : **tribal community courts**, **native « sector » courts**, and **advanced native center courts**. While the first category functions in the traditional communities that have remained unchanged, the courts of the second are established wherever the agelong setup has been modified — such is the case, for example, of « sectors » made up of groups too weak to continue existing on their own ; as for the third category, its tribunals operate in the advanced native centers formed near European urban agglomerations. In these three types of courts, all the judges are natives : either notables designated for these functions by tradition, or members of the elite chosen by the authorities, as the case may be.

The review of judicial decisions is entrusted to the **territorial tribunals**. These also are made up of native judges, but they are presided over by the territorial administrator who exercises general supervision over the courts of the tribal communities, the native « sectors », and the advanced native centers that lie within his jurisdiction.

This native judicial system is linked up with the judicial organization based on written law through the higher courts. Indeed, the latter are vested with the power to direct and supervise, and are authorized to annul judgments which violate provisions established by custom or law, or involve illegal penalties ; also those based on customs contrary to public order or written law, or rendered by a tribunal that is either incompetent or illegally constituted.



## 2.

### **The System of Written Law.**

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#### **A.**

#### **Basic Considerations Underlying the Judicial Reform**

As this book was going to press, an important reform of the Belgian Congo's judicial organization was under consideration. (1)

One of the aims of this reform is to bring about a stricter application of constitutional principles, notably where equality before the law and separation of powers are concerned. Indeed, at the time a judicial organization was first set up in the Congo, these principles were not applicable to their fullest extent because of conditions that no longer prevail: populations too different in manners and customs and in levels of civilization, a very extensive country where means of communication were difficult, etc. Today the evolution of the natives, the increase in the European element, the equipment of the country and its progress in all fields have swept away the obstacles of former times. Thus, the moment has obviously come to normalize the judicial regime, first of all by eliminating from the administration

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(1) The results of this reform, and the new judicial organization that it will give rise to, will be treated in a reissue of the second volume.

of justice everything leading to racial discrimination. A second objective of the reform is to exclude, wherever the present situation makes it possible, the granting of judicial functions to administrative authorities or to authorities vested with the right to prosecute. A third objective is to bring closer together justice and those amenable to it by extending the jurisdiction of local courts.

However, the various measures now under consideration take into account conditions that still exist in the Congolese world: economic, social, and political conditions which dictate, for example, the maintenance in the lower courts of some magistrates who simultaneously hold administrative posts in the government. In the same spirit, care has been taken not to modify the jurisdiction of the native courts; indeed, on the one hand they constitute a framework which until now has given satisfaction, and on the other it would be inexpedient to alter their regime as long as the law they enforce cannot be accurately determined. This law is now in the process of evolution; consequently, the reform must limit itself to promoting the integration of the native courts into the general judicial organization of the Congo.

#### **B.**

#### **The Present Judicial Organization and its Reform.**

##### **The Lower Courts.**

##### **Civil Code.**

In civil law matters, the lower courts are the **courts of the first instance** whose judges are career magistrates. The court of the first instance has, in civil law, full jurisdiction over all civil and commercial matters, whether they concern non-natives or natives; at the request of the latter, it may even decide questions that lie normally within the province of native law.

There are six courts of the first instance in the Congo, one in the capital of each province. At first sight, their number seems inadequate, considering the vast extent of the country. However, this shortcoming is compensated by the fact that these courts are circuit courts: they may sit, if necessary, in any locality within their jurisdiction, and they even have regular sessions in some of the localities. Furthermore, for certain matters of lesser importance, some of the higher courts are vested with civil authority.

Congolese civil justice is relatively swift, as well as easy of access, because of the simplicity of its organization and procedure. It is patterned on the Belgian system, but is much simpler. Its procedure, which is rather informal, has always followed the guiding principle of not invalidating proceedings because of legal flaws, provided the interests of the opposing party are not injured thereby. As for the organization itself, it has no « law officers » such as court ushers, attorneys, or notaries; their functions are filled by government employees. The system is a very flexible one well adapted to the immense and sparsely populated areas that characterize the country; thus, civil justice under the guarantee of the government is available even in the smallest localities. However, the development of the Congo during recent years has brought about such a great increase in the amount of litigation that the personnel in charge is proving to be inadequate; a reform is contemplated to remedy this situation.

With the aim of effecting judicial decentralization and bringing justice nearer to those amenable to it, the reform also plans to grant civil authority to district courts; the latter will thus be empowered to try cases where the amount concerned does not exceed 50,000 francs.

#### Penal Code.

Down to the present time, the Congolese penal code has treated natives and non-natives differently.

The natives are brought before **police courts** for unimportant cases involving penal servitude for two months at most and a fine not exceeding 2,000 francs. In the present system, the territorial administrator is by law the judge of this police court. All other matters, even those involving the death penalty, fall within the jurisdiction of the **district court**; the latter is presided over by the district commissioner, but generally includes a career magistrate who is a member of the « Ministère Public » (body of prosecuting magistrates).

As for non-natives, registered natives, and natives in possession of a card of civic merit, they are answerable to the **court of the first instance** in criminal cases.

This discrimination in the administration of justice is due, not to a spirit contrary to Belgium's principles in such matters, but to conditions prevailing in the past. Indeed, when the European system was first introduced, the native population and the European element were so different in their ways of life that a uniform penal code would have had unjust and disastrous consequences. It should also be noted that it was with the intention of bringing justice nearer to those amenable to it at a time when roads were scarce, that district and police courts were established within the administrative subdivisions; however, as the number of officials available were limited, it was necessary to place the courts under the authority of judges who held administrative posts in the government. Today these early conditions are out of date because of the peoples' evolution and the improvement of communication lines. The reforms also stipulate that, firstly, except for cases coming under the tribal laws, all persons brought to court, whether they be European or African, are subject to the same jurisdiction. Only the gravity of their infringement determines whether they are to be handed over to the police court or to the district court. Moreover, according to plans now in the making, the judges holding administrative posts will be replaced by career magistrates in all district courts and possibly even in the police courts.

As in the case of the civil procedure, the penal procedure is patterned on the Belgian codes, but is much simpler in form and



adapted to the needs of the country and to a population of an entirely different character. Court expenses, all fixed by the record office of the court, are paid in a very simple manner ; in criminal cases, a special rate which is very moderate has been established to favor the natives. A provision peculiar to the Congolese judicial system imposes on the criminal courts the duty of deciding the amount of damages, interest payments, as well as other sums due the native, without his having to start a civil suit.

In the Congo, violations of the law are not — as in Belgium — divided according to their seriousness into the categories of crimes, misdemeanors, and minor offenses. Imprisonment is called « penal servitude » and consists of detention in prisons set up wherever criminal courts are located ; compulsory labor of different kinds is assigned to the prisoners, either within the confines of the prisons or in the vicinity. Prison annexes and detention camps are sometimes established, and in the latter the long-term prisoners may be given work beneficial to the community. In the present system, little has been done in the way of providing houses of correction and reform institutions. However, a first step forward has been made in the domain of juvenile delinquency : a decree issued in 1950 has replaced, for delinquent minors, the penalty of imprisonment by custody measures, re-education, and social readjustment ; the district judges thus actually become judges of children's courts. This decree has already been put into effect in the Lower Congo.

### The "Ministère Public" (Body of Prosecuting Magistrates) and the Higher Courts.

The « Ministère Public » includes a « procureur général » (high-ranking public prosecuting attorney) assigned to every court of appeal, and in the capital of each province several « procureurs du Roi » (King's prosecuting attorneys) assisted by substitutes, a certain number of whom are distributed throughout

the districts. This « Ministère Public » takes on a special character in the present judicial organization of the Congo. Indeed, the rôle of the « Ministère Public » is not merely to prosecute delinquents and supervise the administration of the judicial police — a domain in which it is answerable to the executive power (1) — but also to give general protection to the natives of whom it is the legal guardian. In this capacity, it acts in civil cases for the benefit of the natives who have been wronged ; it supervises the police courts and directs the native tribunals. With a view to providing the means of fulfilling these tasks, higher courts have been set up ; in each district there is such a court where the presiding judge is the « procureur du Roi » or his substitute. These courts have criminal jurisdiction which empowers them to review the judgments of police courts, and civil jurisdiction for cases where the amount involved does not exceed 25,000 francs. They also exercise an influence on the native jurisdictions whose decisions they have the power to annul.

The judicial reform contemplated plans to do away with these higher courts and transfer their jurisdiction to the district courts since, in accordance with the new conception, these would be presided over by a career magistrate.

### The Courts of Appeal.

The judgments of the district courts can be appealed to the court of the first instance concerned.

Judgments delivered by a court of the first instance when functioning as a lower court can be brought before a court of appeal in all criminal cases, and in civil cases when the sum involved exceeds 7,500 francs or cannot be evaluated. Judgments delivered in civil cases by the higher courts can also be taken to a court of appeal when the sum concerned exceeds 7,500 francs.

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(1) In the preceding chapter, see the topic headed « The Judicial Power ».

There are two courts of appeal in the Congo : one of them, at Elisabethville, has jurisdiction over the provinces of Katanga and Kivu ; the other, at Leopoldville, has jurisdiction over the remaining four provinces.

The reform contemplated to add to this system an appeal procedure for judgments delivered by the territorial tribunals ; this will make it possible to appeal these decisions to the district tribunals.

### The Supreme Court.

While the lower courts and the courts of appeal function in the Congo itself, the final appeal must be made in Belgium before the Supreme Court. Until the present time, the jurisdiction of this court has been merely civil and commercial, but the present reform contemplates extending its authority to the criminal and disciplinary domain in certain cases.

### The Military Courts.

Alongside this general organization, there are military courts : courts-martial and appellate courts-martial ; the latter will eventually, in accordance with the spirit of the reform, be converted into military tribunals.

The jurisdiction of these courts is limited in principle to the military. Indeed, the basic law of the Congo forbids, except in special cases, the substitution of military courts for civil courts. Only the King or, in urgent cases, the governor general — on the advice of the « procureur général » — may authorize this substitution ; it can take place only for reasons that concern the public safety, and it must be limited to a definite territory and a definite period of time. The reform provides that the military courts will henceforth deal only with purely military offenses.

### The Congolese Bar.

A decree issued in 1930 created the Congolese bar. In the courts of appeal and the leading courts of the first instance, there is a list of lawyers admitted to the practice of their profession. No one's name is placed on such a list unless he has a law degree and can furnish proofs of good character.

Lawyers are under oath and are subject to the discipline of the courts of appeal ; their rights and duties are on the whole analogous to those prevalent in the bar associations of Belgium.

It should be noted that alongside of this bar there also exists in certain tribal courts, chiefly in those of the centers, a number of natives who assume the role of counsels for the defense : they are, in fact, attorneys of a sort appointed by their clients. The progress of the profession depends on several factors such as the evolution of the tribal laws and customs, the complications arising from the mixture of many tribal customs existing in the native agglomerations and, above all, the part to be played by the native lawyers who will have completed their university studies in a few years from now.



CHAPTER III  
**THE FINANCIAL  
ORGANIZATION**

## SUMMARY

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## 1.

### Public Finances.

The Congo and Belgium have distinct personalities and distinct inherited national wealth. This fundamental principle was established by the Colonial Charter of 1908. The budgets, accounts, assets, liabilities, currencies, customs, and taxes of the Congo and of Belgium must therefore be kept separate. However, it should be noted that in spite of this principle of the separation of their national wealth, the mother country, by virtue of the very exercise of its sovereignty, must — in the last analysis — assume responsibility, on the international level, for the debts of the Congo, those that existed at the time the territory was taken over as well as those that have been contracted since then.



## **A. Budgets.**

Congolese budgets are highly centralized : they include all the territory's public receipts and disbursements. Only the cities of Leopoldville, Elisabethville, and Jadotville have their own budgets. But these cases are merely exceptions that have a very slight influence on the sum total of the financial operations. However, in the actual execution of fiscal policies, a system of delegation of power to the different levels of administrative authority makes a certain amount of decentralization possible.

Side by side with the specifically Congolese budgets, there exists a Belgian budget — for the Congo — of minor importance; financed by the Belgian budget of Ways and Means, it is intended to provide for almost all the expenses of the Ministry of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi.

As for the Congolese budgetary technique, it is patterned on that of the mother country. Every year the estimates of receipts and disbursements are prepared by the African finance department and then transmitted to the Ministry of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. The latter submits them, in the form of budgetary laws, to Parliament for its approval. The Audit Office in Belgium intervenes in its turn by submitting to Parliament its comments on the working out of the budget.

### **Nature of the Ordinary Budgets.**

Congolese budgets faithfully reflect the economic expansion of the country. Each year, from 1908 to 1952, receipts and disbursements have followed a steady and healthy evolution : while the average increase in receipts during this period amounted to about 18 % a year, the increase in disbursements remained consistently less and was finally stabilized at about 12 %.

However, until the last war, the ordinary budget of the Congo at certain times showed a deficit that Belgium had to make good. The situation was particularly critical at the time of the great depression of the years 1932-1953. But since the war, budgetary equilibrium has been established and up to 1957, a year marked by the world-wide recession, it has regularly presented a great surplus in receipts. These surpluses have made possible the setting up of reserves for the Special Budgetary Equalization Fund intended to be used in case of a depression. Beyond this contribution, the balance of the surpluses is invested, through the Special Budget, in the economic equipment of the country.

### **Receipts.**

In the present state of the Congolese economy which is largely based on foreign trade, the budget is still in great part fed by different kinds of customs duties ; more than 40 % of the receipts come from import, export, excise, and transit duties.

However, income and personal taxes become increasingly important as the local productive activities develop and become diversified. They already furnish some 30 % of the resources. On the other hand, the poll tax — which applies to natives who have no income of any consequence — brings in only 3 % of the receipts ; it should be emphasized that this percentage, already very small, is getting even smaller.

Finally, receipts from the public domain and from various government departments — judicial, economic, etc. — constitute 17 % in the aggregate, and income from the portfolio holdings of the Colony amounts to 10 %.

### **Disbursements.**

A large part of the budgetary expenses — nearly 40 % — is earmarked for the payment of the salaries of the administrative personnel : the greater part of the sums allocated is absorbed by government departments dealing with economic and social matters, such as public works, agriculture, teaching, and medical

care. It should be noted that an increase in the number of employees and the gradual increase in the salaries of the native agents tend to add to the total amount of these expenses.

As for the burden imposed by the public debt — some 15 % — it continues to rise as investments in the Ten Year Plan increase. Likewise, the burden represented by the payment of pensions — which is about 3 % — is also becoming heavier from year to year.

Among the other budgetary expenses, 3 % is allocated to the Special Budgetary Equalization Fund, 12 % to purchases of matériel, and 7 % to various administrative expenses. Finally, various subsidies traditionally represent an important element in the Congolese budget : they go as high as 20 % of the expenses.

### Nature of the Special Budgets.

While the ordinary budget covers one year, the execution of the special budgets can be spread over three years.

The special budgets include essentially expenses that are not intended for the current administration of the country : these are investment expenses that make possible the creation of an economic and social substructure. Thus the special budget takes care chiefly of the expenses involved in the construction of roads and airports, schools, hospitals, and dispensaries, and also in the utilization of sources of energy, and the development of agriculture ; it even provides for the defensive equipment of the country. In the course of the past few years, the greater part of the special sums allocated has been devoted to the implementation of the Ten Year Plan. (1)

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(1) See the chapter devoted to the Ten Year Plan in Part 4.

The receipts of the special budget are supplied especially by loans floated on the home and the foreign market as well as by the surpluses produced by the ordinary budget.

### The Special Budgetary Equalization Fund.

The favorable condition of the Colony's budget has made it possible to take steps which, in case of an economic depression, would place large financial reserves at the government's disposal.

For this purpose, a Special Budgetary Equalization Fund was created in 1950. This Fund is fed on the one hand by the annual surpluses of the ordinary budget, and on the other by certain receipts that are fixed by law. Nothing can be taken from the reserves of the Fund except by virtue of a law, and only for the purpose of preventing a lack of balance in the ordinary budget in case of an economic depression ; therefore there can be no question of utilizing the Fund to feed the special budget.

At the end of 1956, the accumulated reserves amounted to more than 8,000,000,000 francs ; they represented approximately the sum necessary for the ordinary expenses of one year. As of now, the existence of this Fund already permits the government to apply an anticyclical policy in a potential period of depression.

## B.

### The Fiscal and Customs Systems.

#### Taxes.

The Congolese fiscal system is relatively simple ; it is also much more flexible than the Belgian, especially in regard to the principles that govern the finding of new sources of public income and the granting of exemptions.



Thus it happens that only decisions concerning taxes and import and export duties require the intervention of the legislative power; other taxes, such as compensatory taxes, can be fixed by the executive power. Besides, the governor general, whose duty it is to see to it that the living conditions of the Congolese are improved, may grant the natives temporary personal tax exemptions — aside from the cases legally provided for. These interventions of the executive in the establishment of new taxes and exemption from paying them are however submitted to the control of Parliament at the time the budget is voted on.

### Direct Taxes.

Direct taxes include the native tax, the personal tax, and the income tax.

The **native tax** is essentially a poll tax. It is a fixed sum, very moderate, calculated each year according to the region, taking local resources into account. It is paid by the natives who have no appreciable income.

The gradual improvement in the standard of living of the natives tends to eliminate little by little this primitive method of taxation; as soon as they have acquired a certain economic standing, the natives are subject, just as Europeans are, to personal and income taxes.

The **personal tax** is fixed according to some basic points which are considered indications of the wealth of the taxpayer. There are six such points which are as follows: the floor space of the buildings occupied; the area of the land not built on within the urban districts; the number of salaried employees in the service of the party concerned; water craft; vehicles; the area of mining concessions.

The tax is calculated separately on each one of these six points and in each case a different tax rate is applied.

The **income tax** is levied on occupational incomes (earned incomes), incomes from rents collected in the Congo, incomes from capital invested in the Colony and constituting personal property. In certain cases the tax may amount to 25 %.

It should be mentioned that the companies and other taxpayers residing in Belgium but deriving their income from the Congo are taxed according to the Belgian fiscal regime, as established by the law of 1927. A special bureau divides the proceeds of these taxes between Belgium and the Congo, the latter receiving about 80 % of the amounts collected. The companies concerned pay a complementary tax to the Colony.

### Indirect Taxes.

The fiscal system of the Congo also includes indirect taxes in the form of various taxes and fees: the consumption tax, the statistical tax, the selection tax, the transfer tax, and the registration fee.

The **consumption tax** is levied on alcoholic beverages, manufactured tobaccos, and mineral oil; the **statistical tax**, a kind of compensatory tax, is intended to provide for the needs of commercial statistics; the **selection tax** is also a kind of compensatory tax whose aim is to make the planters share in the expenses of the Institut National pour l'Etude Agronomique du Congo Belge (National Institute for the Agronomical Study of the Belgian Congo).

The **transfer tax**, which varies from 1.5 to 6 % is levied on transactions concerning registered real estate — transactions between living persons (*inter vivos*) or transactions resulting from death; the **registration fee** of 1.2 % is levied on the capital of joint stock companies on the occasion of the establishment or increase of their capital, or the extension of a company's life.

## Customs Duties.

The customs regime of the Belgian Congo is limited by certain international obligations. They were very strict at the time the Congo Free State was established, but gradually became more flexible.

In 1885, the General Act of Berlin authorized the young state to levy export duties, but import duties were forbidden. Leopold II had secured from the Brussels Conference of 1889 a slackening of the original rule, permitting him to collect import duties up to a maximum of 10 % ad valorem ; in 1919 the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye removed this last restriction. Today the Congo is free to impose import duties as well as export duties without any restriction as to the rate. The only important trace left of these successive international treaties is the impossibility of establishing a preferential regime in favor of Belgium. The mother country must be placed on the same footing, as far as customs duties are concerned, as all the other countries, whether customers or suppliers.

In the course of time another evolution has also marked the system of customs duties. Their exclusively fiscal character has gradually lessened and they have become an instrument destined to protect the economic development of the country and especially of its new industries. And so the import duties assure relative protection for merchandise manufactured locally, especially by taxing rather heavily the importation of similar goods from abroad. Likewise, with the aim of favoring the industrialization of the Congo, machinery constituting the first equipment for a new industrial or agricultural exploitation is admitted free of duty. Naval construction is also encouraged by special exemptions.

In the cultural field, permanent exemptions favor the introduction of objects having a scientific or educational character, as well as religious objects.

Export duties, on the contrary, have retained a very marked fiscal character, especially as far as coffee is concerned ; in fact they constitute income taxes collected on exportation. Export duties are established « ad valorem » ; in the case of most of the leading export products, the governor general determines the basic value on which these duties are calculated.

## C. Loans, the Public Debt, and the Portfolio Holdings.

### The Public Debt.

The issuance of a public loan by the Belgian Congo or the granting of its guarantee to a loan floated by third parties, such as public organizations, requires the voting of a law by the Belgian Parliament. However, when receipts are not sufficient to offset expenses, the Treasury may be affected by temporary deficits. In such a case, the King has the right to issue Treasury Bonds to the amount of 70,000,000 francs.

The direct debt of the Colony is thus made up of both loans and Treasury Bonds. These Treasury Bonds, which constitute the floating debt, amount to less than one-fifth of the total indebtedness. Long or medium-term loans forming the consolidated debt are generally floated on the Belgian market. But recently they have also been floated abroad, in Switzerland, in the United States, and through international organizations such as the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development.

Side by side with this direct debt, there exists an indirect debt formed by the guarantee that the Colony has given — especially in the sectors of credit and transportation — to loans contracted by certain public utility organizations ; this guarantee would become a direct debt in the event that the guaranteed third



party should not be in a position to fulfill its obligations. Down to the present time, the burden represented by this indirect debt has remained negligible.

Since 1937, a Sinking Fund of the Public Debt, with resources of its own and the status of a juristic person, has been created to administer the special resources and endowments intended for the reduction of the debt. It is different from a Fonds de Soutien des Rentes (Fund established for the support of government securities) because it cannot put back into circulation the public money it has received.

## The Portfolio Holdings.

Traditionally, from the time the Congo Free State was created, close collaboration has existed between the government and private enterprise, and this fact has stimulated the economic expansion of the country.

Among other things, this collaboration has made possible participation in the capital of companies of all kinds, ranging from mining to the distribution of water, and from public transportation to real estate activities, etc. The sums involved have attained such proportions that they are not far from equalling the amount of the Public Debt, and that the income from the capital possessed by the Colony more than compensates for the interest due on the loans.

## 2.

## Currency, Credit, and Savings.

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### A.

### Currency.

The Congolese monetary system is independent of the Belgian system. As a result, the Congolese franc is separate from the Belgian franc and is covered by its own reserve. The Congo possesses a separate payments balance, a separate foreign currency reserve, and it exercises foreign currency control even with regard to Belgium.

However, the Congolese currency has retained since the very beginning the same value as the currency of the mother country; separate in principle but equivalent in fact, these two currencies constitute the Belgian monetary zone.

Based today on the gold standard, the Congolese franc was created in 1887. After having originally issued its currency directly, the Congo Free State in 1911 conferred the issuing privilege on a private bank — the Bank of the Belgian Congo. The latter, between 1911 and 1952, issued bearer banknotes and exercised the functions of cashier of the state. But, in 1952, it was decided to create a special issuing agency: the Central Bank of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi.

Placed under government control, this Central Bank is a public establishment commissioned to issue currency and serve as cashier of the state. It also exercises control over foreign exchange and private banks as well as financial institutions and insurance companies. In addition, it supervises the issuance, sale, and purchase of transferable securities.

The monetary circulation has undergone a great and rapid expansion in the Congo. This expansion, which was at its height between 1937 and 1954, reflects the progress of economic activities and a series — uninterrupted in the course of several years — of surpluses in the payments balance. The fiduciary circulation, less than 700,000,000 francs in 1937, exceeded 22,000,000,000 francs in 1956.

This great abundance of currency must not be confused with inflation, for not only has there been no excessive rise in prices, but side by side with the increase in currency, available resources have steadily grown. Moreover, a part of the assets are sterilized in the Special Budgetary Equalization Fund. Down to the present time, the position of the Congolese franc has remained very strong. An eloquent indication is the increase in the gold coverage; the latter, which at one time amounted to a quarter of the value of the bearer obligations in Congolese francs rose to one-third in 1956.

## B. Credit.

Today, the great majority of the credit institutions, public and private, that exist in industrialized countries, can be found in the Congo.

In this domain the Central Bank has had conferred upon it various functions, such as rediscounting and the supervision of banks and financial institutions. However, even if it is the cashier of the state, it rarely has any occasion to play the part of a banker for private banks and to supervise credit, because the abundance of liquid assets in the banks makes any policy in regard to discount rates unnecessary, and the absence of a stock market excludes open market operations. As a matter of fact, there is as yet no financial market in the Congo; but at Leopoldville there is a market for government securities that may some day develop into a stock exchange.

As for the activity of private banks, it is in full swing and highly concentrated; the leading establishment holds 80 % of the deposits. The most important banks are the Bank of the Belgian Congo, the dean of Congolese banks, which was founded in 1909, and the Belgian Bank of Africa, founded in 1928. After the last war, the Société Congolaise de Banque (Congolese Banking Company), the Crédit Congolais (Congolese Credit Bank), and the Kredietbank-Congo (Congo Credit Bank) were founded.

The Société de Crédit au Colonat et à l'Industrie (Credit Bank for the Colonat and for Industry) plays an important rôle in the functioning of credit. Created in 1947, its aim is to stimulate the establishment and development of small or medium-sized enterprises by extending long-term or medium-term credit. The activities of this company have expanded greatly. Indeed, ten years after its founding, at the end of 1956, its open credits passed the billion-franc mark.



The extension of credit to the natives raises a new problem in the Congo which will assume greater importance as the resources and initiative of the natives increase. Relatively small down to the present time, this credit was formerly extended by the administrative funds of the chieftaincies, or by a Special Fund for agricultural credit, or by a Loan Fund which encourages home-buying. In view of the numerous difficulties connected with the organization of a system of guarantees, private banks showed little interest in such operations, but already the Société de Crédit au Colonat et à l'Agriculture as well as the Caisse d'Epargne (Government Saving Bank) have taken up this new activity.

### C. Savings.

A very large share of the resources of the Congolese economy is put into savings and investment. And so between 1950 and 1955, 26 to 35 % of the available resources of this economy have gone into savings, a fact that has greatly stimulated public and private investments.

During the last few years, the natives have contributed their share to the sum total of the country's savings, a share which will doubtless become greater and greater. It is chiefly with the aim of stimulating the desire of the natives to save money and thus introduce inactive sums into the economic current that the Caisse d'Epargne du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi (Government Savings Bank of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi) has been founded.

Established in 1950 as a public institution, this Savings Bank has its main office in Leopoldville and its administrative headquarters in Brussels. It has at its head, in Belgium, a board of directors whose members are chosen by the King; this board selects the director who is entrusted with the daily administration at Leopoldville.

Ever since its foundation, this Savings Bank has shown itself to be a dynamic organization which immediately undertook a vast campaign of penetration into the native milieux. Thanks to the perseverance shown, this campaign, a long-range undertaking, seems destined to achieve success. Indeed, at first the natives deposited their savings in the Bank with a view to purchasing — very soon after — consumer goods such as bicycles or sewing-machines; little by little, once confidence in the organization had been built up these deposits were transformed into more stable savings which — especially in the « centres extra-coutumiers » (1) — are being used more and more for the acquisition of real estate.

To be sure, down to the present time, the savings of natives taken individually represent only a small part of the sum total of the deposits. Much more important is the contribution of certain native organizations such as the Caisses de Chefferies (Native Community Funds), and especially the Caisse de Réserve Cotonnière (Cotton Reserve Fund) which, with the aim of regularizing cotton prices for Congolese cotton growers, has built up reserves that exceed a billion francs. However, until the present time, two-thirds of the funds administered by the Savings Bank have had their origin in Europe.

The Savings Bank invests the deposits entrusted to it. It buys chiefly Belgian and Congolese public funds and grants mortgage loans; it is following a policy of longer-term investments which will obviously be more remunerative.

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(1) The « centres extra-coutumiers » are officially recognized communities of natives who have left their various tribes to live and work elsewhere.

CHAPTER IV  
**THE MILITARY  
ORGANIZATION**



## SUMMARY

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## 1.

### The Congolese Army.

#### A.

#### Creation and Development of a Congolese Army.

In 1886, the army of the Congo Free State was created by order of Leopold II. Raised by Captain Roget, it was named the « Congolese Army ».

This Congolese Army has played a glorious part closely linked with the history of the country. Thanks to it, the Congo Free State was to carry through the tasks imposed upon it as an obligation by the Congress of Berlin. These tasks were the effective occupation of the territory and the suppression of the slave trade. Later, during the two World Wars, it made its fighting qualities felt beyond the frontiers in the victorious

campaigns of Cameroon and Rhodesia, in the conquest of German East Africa and, more recently, at the time of the capture of Saio in 1941.

The first troops consisted chiefly of volunteers serving as protective escorts for the explorers. They were Hausas, Elminas, Kaffirs, and natives of Zanzibar. However, as soon as possible, these foreigners were replaced by Congolese and, as early as 1897, almost the entire contingent was made up of Congolese.

European officers and non-commissioned officers — most of them Belgians — assured the officering of these troops. Long before the creation of the Congolese Army — from 1877 on, the time when the first expeditions were organized under the aegis of the International African Association — the Belgian army had sent the boldest of its units to the Congo. They paid a heavy tribute to the cause undertaken: in some thirty years, from 1877 to 1908, out of 2,200 Belgian officers and non-commissioned officers who served in the Congo, 662 — almost one third — died, killed in battles or victims either of the climate or tropical diseases. There were also numerous foreign soldiers who came to collaborate in the undertaking of Leopold II. Like the Belgians, they sacrificed their health and often their lives: for example, the Scandinavians, of whom about sixty died during the same period.

At that time, when means of communication were rare, the young army of the Congo Free State was highly decentralized. In each district there was a garrison that consisted of a company varying in strength. It was only now and then, on the occasion of expeditions of great importance, that several companies were united under the command of one leader.

Today, benefiting by a long African past and the experience of the two World Wars in which it participated, the Congolese Army has developed into a modern army, well equipped and numbering 25,000 men ready for action.

## B. Organization and Recruitment.

The Congolese Army has a twofold mission: it must at one and the same time assure the defense and occupation of the Congo and maintain public order and peace.

Its organization equips it for this double mission. It includes — besides general headquarters — three groups to which are added an independent brigade, a defense unit for the region of the Lower Congo, a company of Congolese commandos, air units and various other units such as the Base of Leopoldville, the Central School of Luluabourg, transport and supply units as well as training camps (1). Each of the three groups is detailed to serve two provinces and is divided into « encamped troops » and « troops assigned to territorial duty ». The latter are placed permanently at the disposal of the civil authorities, while the encamped troops take orders only from the military authorities although they can be requisitioned by the civil authorities to restore order in case of public disturbances.

The equipment of the troops has been planned in accordance with the nature of the terrain on which they may be called to operate. Arms, transportation, and communication matériel are at one and the same time modern, light, and strong; they serve the troops for expeditions into the bush as well as for transportation by road or by air. The command and the training are assured by volunteers who have come from the Belgian army.

The internal organization of the Congolese Army is left to a great extent to the initiative of the governor general. However, the size of the native contingent to be recruited each year is decided by the legislature.

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(1) The Congolese Army also disposes of a battalion assigned to territorial duty in Ruanda-Urundi.



How are the Congolese soldiers recruited ?

Some are enlisted men, others are militiamen chosen by lot or designated by the native chiefs ; in both cases, their period of service is fixed at seven years. Still other recruits are militiamen who re-enlist at the end of their service. There are also militiamen who serve for a period limited to two years ; these are young men who have completed at least a part of their intermediate studies and have been chosen by lot right in their school. The great majority of the effectives consists of volunteers and re-enlisted men. Thus in 1956, out of a recruitment contingent fixed that year at 3,819 men, 1,544 were volunteers, 1,426 had re-enlisted, and only 849 were militiamen ; about a hundred of the latter came under the special ruling of two years of service.

### C.

#### Social Function of the Congolese Army.

The Congolese Army does not confine its activities to the defense of the territory and the maintenance of public order. It exercises an important social function (education, instruction, vocational and social training) which identifies it — beyond the military field — with the civil life of the country and gives it a decidedly original character.

First of all, it offers to the Congolese — within its own ranks — an interesting career. Until very recently this career ended at the subaltern rank of sergeant-major. Soon, thanks to new schools, an elite of Congolese officers — commissioned and non-commissioned — will have access to ranks formerly reserved for Europeans. Beginning in 1961, Congolese will serve as adjutants. What is more, right now the first Congolese candidates for officers' commissions are taking courses in the modern human-

ities in a training school founded by the Congolese Army, and those with the most aptitude will be sent to the Royal Military School of Brussels. The first Congolese officers will take up their duties as early as 1962 or 1963.

But the possibilities offered to the natives by their service in the units of the Congolese Army are even greater and go far beyond mere military training. Indeed, because of the mechanization of the units, the constantly increasing utilization of the radio and the most modern means of communication, the setting up of camps and the repair of the matériel on the spot, the command has been led to create technical schools, workshops for apprentices, trade guilds where the vocational and technical training of the personnel is assured. Schools for chauffeurs, mechanics, wireless-telegraphists and bookkeepers, as well as workshops for carpenters, masons, shoemakers, tailors, etc. all send back highly qualified men to civilian life every year. One single fact will give an idea of the influence of this training on the native population : in 1956, the Congolese Army gave artisan's certificates to about 1,500 specialists in about thirty different trades.

Supporting this military, technical and vocational training, a broad plan is in operation to guarantee every soldier at least an adequate elementary education. Besides adult courses which enable soldiers to learn how to read and write while they serve, there exist also advanced courses that are at their disposal.

This educational policy is extended even to the families of military men. Indeed, in the Congolese camps, from the beginning of the training period soldiers are authorized to be accompanied by their families. They are even encouraged to do so, and social centers undertake especially to instruct their wives and help them adapt themselves to modern life. For the benefit of the children, schools have been created in the camps : kindergartens, elementary schools (five of them on the European level) and finally a training school. It should be noted that the children of soldiers are free, if their parents so desire, to attend any school outside the camp.

Finally, to crown all this activity, a special educational service has been created since 1946. In addition to its general rôle of co-ordination, it assumes special tasks : it produces educational or propaganda films, furnishes weekly radio broadcasts, and prints on its own press a newspaper intended for soldiers and veterans. A sure sign of the success of this newspaper is the fact that more than 20,000 Congolese pay their subscription to it every year.

## 2.

### The Belgian Forces of Africa.

Side by side with the Congolese Army, which is essentially native, there exist in the Congo forces that are exclusively European and that form a part of the Belgian army : these are the Belgian forces of Africa.

The latter — created after World War II — are specialized troops that participate together with the Congolese Army in the defense of the Congo. At the start, they had been thought of as forming a kind of national redoubt that would remain outside the first combats in case of conflict. But gradually their mission has become more definite : today it is directed much less toward the defense of Europe than toward that of the Congo itself. And so these forces from the mother country successfully supplement, through the contribution of their naval, air, and para-commando forces, the defensive objectives of the Congolese Army.

The Belgian Forces of Africa are under the direct command of the Minister of National Defense. However, in case of riots or serious disturbances, the governor general can requisition their aid. They have at their head a high commander who, among other functions, keeps in close touch with the Belgian general staff and constitutes the connecting link between the Ministry of National Defense and the authorities of the Congo.



These forces include a naval base at Banana and two air and land bases located at Kamina and Kitona.

The naval base at Banana assumes responsibility for the provisioning and for the maintenance of the dredging and convoy boats that represent Belgian sovereignty over the mouth of the Congo River and constitute at the same time a link in the allied organization of control over sea routes.

The air and land base at Kitona, established not far from Banana, is used as headquarters of the air and naval defense of the mouth of the river ; it is equipped to serve as a transit camp for important land forces and to permit the stationing of long-distance reconnaissance planes armed for combat against submarines.

Finally, the air and land base of Kamina consists of a battalion of para-commandos, an aviation school, a center of instruction for Belgian militiamen who wish to serve in the Congo, and even a technical school — intended for the Congolese — which trains civil aviation mechanics for the needs of the base. This very important base has cost more than three billion francs. The buildings cover at least sixty acres.

It should be noted that these bases employ a large number of native workers. They have been prompt in extending to their African employees ever-widening social benefits, not only in regard to lodging and care for the workers, but also in the organization of their leisure time and the creation of schools and social centers.

## CHAPTER V THE LAND POLICY

## SUMMARY

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## 1.

### The Lands.

#### A.

#### Priority of the Native's Right to the Land.

In the Belgian Congo any application for land which appears vacant gives rise to a preliminary inquiry into the possible existence of native rights to it. The body of rules and regulations governing land is based not only on the desire to exploit and make the most of the vast stretches of a country whose soil seems largely unused, but also on the respect due the prior rights of the natives.

A knowledge of the principles of Congolese native law concerning land becomes therefore indispensable because these principles constitute the very foundation on which the merits of any concessions or cessions of lands to private parties are based.

What are the broad outlines of this native law ?



According to Congolese native law, individual landownership does not exist; there is only collective landownership. The land belongs to the clan, a community made up of family groups consisting of all the descendants — living and dead — of a common ancestor and, in theory, all the generations to come.

No one can alienate this collective proprietorship which extends through both space and time. No one can claim to have received a mandate from the dead or from those as yet unborn authorizing him to alienate in a manner detrimental to their interests the land that they have acquired or that they will need for their subsistence. This continuity of the clan throughout the past and the future establishes the inalienability of the native lands.

If no one can, in the name of the clan, alienate this land which belongs at one and the same time to the living, the dead, and the unborn, the right to make use of it can however be granted to strangers. But such concessions can be authorized only by qualified persons and according to conventional forms prescribed by local usage.

As a matter of fact, a custodian is put in charge of lands belonging to the clan, an administrator of property who is supposed to represent the will of both the living and the dead. In certain communities with a more mature political regime, this property custodian will be the ruler of the clan himself, but most frequently he is a « chef de terre » (land chief) who is either a descendant of the common ancestor of the clan or of the first occupants of the soil. This « chef de terre » is not necessarily the political chief of the community: in many cases he coexists with other native authorities and may even have no other public rôle than that of giving a valid title to certain concessions. The character and origin of this property custodian illustrate clearly the unbroken continuity of the physical tie that unites living and dead in the enjoyment of collective property rights.

This recognized custodian — whom it is very important to know if one wants to be sure of the validity of transactions with the native community — has no authority to alienate or sell any lands belonging to the clan.

But he is authorized to grant the right to make use of the land: therefore, he may give a stranger the right to occupy it. However, the clan will always retain, according to native law, the ownership of the land thus granted.

Furthermore, such a concession is never looked upon by the natives as perpetual. It may have, in some cases, a duration limited to the completion of certain operations. However, concessions for occupancy are generally for indefinite duration, and they can always be annulled by the party granting them if the beneficiary does not live up to the terms of the agreement.

Nevertheless, other persons than the official custodian of the clan's property may concede certain rights to strangers. Such persons are members of the same clan, who may dispose of individual rights, such as hunting, fishing, harvesting, and wood-cutting rights, all of which are regulated in a precise manner according to custom. Thus, for example, custom generally divides among family groups the lands on which their members may exercise such rights. By respecting similar rules governing the apportionment of lands, these individuals have also the right to occupy, inherit, and cultivate lands belonging to the clan. Every member of the clan may, in his personal capacity, grant such individual user's rights even to strangers.

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Native law, as it has been set forth here in its broad outlines, is still in force on the lands belonging to the natives. However, under the influence of western economic life, and because the natives are beginning to find themselves, it is clear — especially in the advanced centers — that they are aspiring more and more to the possession of individual property. These aspirations are bound to become more widespread. In order to deal with this situation, a decree issued February 1, 1953 has made it possible under certain conditions for native Congolese to become individual property owners. Thus, within the limits set

by this decree, any Congolese may acquire, in an individual capacity, not only parcels of land in the advanced native centers or in the areas set aside for the native « colonat » (colonists, collectively), but also in the public lands and the registered lands.

## B. Congolese Lands.

According to ownership, Congolese lands are divided into four main categories :

- Native lands
- Vacant or public lands
- Lands leased to private parties
- Lands sold to private parties and registered.

### Native Lands.

The native lands have always been given special protection. As early as 1885, an ordinance forbade dispossessing the natives of the lands they occupied, and in 1906, a decree still in force determined what was meant by native lands.

According to the terms of this decree, they are the lands that the natives inherit, cultivate, or exploit in any manner, according to the local ways and customs. The concepts of cultivation and exploitation are here interpreted in a very broad sense ; thus, whatever may be their extent, fallow lands are treated the same as cultivated lands, and mere fruit gathering is enough to make land count as under exploitation.

Furthermore, in order to allow for future expansion, the authorities may grant every village an additional stretch of land three times the size of what it cultivates and exploits.

The laws of the Colony expressly recognize the native's traditional rights concerning land ; these rights may be either the collective ownership of the soil, or others — such as hunting rights — acquired by natives on vacant lands.

All these rights are explicitly protected, notably by the decrees of 1934 and 1935. For example, in order to avoid any possible danger of the native authorities being corrupted or unduly influenced, it is provided that the natives cannot dispose directly of their rights in favor of private parties. They can grant these rights only to the government itself, and such a cession is accompanied by special guarantees : a delegate representing the governor general explains to the natives the exact meaning of the agreement, assures himself of their freely given consent, and ascertains if, according to custom, the representatives of the natives are qualified to cede the rights in question.

Even mere occupancy of native lands is stringently regulated. In every case, the consent of the qualified tribal authorities must be secured and, if this occupancy is lucrative by nature, the consent of the administrative authorities is always required ; moreover, in this last case, the area allotted cannot exceed 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  acres.

### Public or Government-owned Lands.

Public lands are vacant lands. The government is the proprietor and therefore can dispose of them either by leasing them or by selling full ownership rights in them to anybody.

But lands cannot be considered vacant, viz., forming a part of the public domain, unless an official inquiry has made it clear that they do not belong to the natives. In the absence of such an inquiry establishing a state of vacancy, land cannot be sold or leased to a private party. Here again appears the legislator's solicitude to respect the priority of the native's rights.



For certain sections of land, a general preliminary inquiry establishes vacancy once for all. This applies to rural centers and to areas set aside for exploitation by the « colonat ». Vacancy having been previously and definitely established, parcels of land can be leased directly. But whatever may be the formula adopted, the preliminary inquiry into the question of vacancy is always necessary.

This inquiry is subject to very strict rules fixed by the decree of May 31, 1934. It is decided upon by the district commissioner and conducted by a territorial official in the presence of all the natives who are interested parties, and it is afterwards subjected to a double check by the district commissioner and a magistrate. In connection with the inquiry, mention is made of the rights that the natives are willing to grant and of those that they expressly reserve for themselves. The results are communicated to the natives on two occasions and, after the second time, they are given two years during which they may formulate possible objections.

The formalities, guarantees, and supervision required make such inquiries very long drawn out and complex ; however, when it is a question of lands not exceeding five acres in area, a simpler and briefer inquiry has been provided for by the decree of May 8, 1936.

If the procedure is long and complicated, it has the advantage of giving the future owner the assurance that he disposes of land definitely free from any native rights except such as the interested parties have reserved expressly for themselves.

Before 1934, this system of guaranties for both parties did not exist ; consequently, the beneficiaries of property rights prior to 1934 are not necessarily protected from native claims. In order to protect themselves, they may however submit their land to the kind of inquiry provided for by the decree of 1934.

## The System of Concessions (leasing) and Cessions (selling) of Public Lands.

Only those lands officially recognized as vacant and thus incorporated in the public domain can be either leased or sold to private parties.

In the Congolese system, leasing is normally the stage preceding selling ; leases are given for a definite period of time.

In principle, the territory leased can be sold, but only if it has been exploited in conformity with the agreement made.

If the beneficiary wishes to change the use to which the land is put during the lifetime of the concession or in the course of the thirty years following the cession, he must ask for an authorization to do so. Indeed, rents and prices vary according to the use made of the land : agricultural, industrial, commercial, or residential. Illicit changes in the manner of exploitation are punished by a civil fine.

Who may sell or lease public lands ?

In the Congo, the government is not the only power which exercises the right of cession and concession. In certain parts of the country, it has delegated this right to two organizations : the Comité Spécial du Katanga (Special Committee for Katanga) and the Comité National du Kivu (National Committee for Kivu). The former administers the lands in the greater part of Katanga as well as a zone situated in the Southeast of Kasai ; it will enjoy this right until 1999. The Comité National du Kivu will exercise the same attributions over 750,000 acres located in Kivu, until 2011.

However, neither the government nor these organizations are free from all restraint. Here again appear not only the legislator's solicitude to do everything in his power in order to avert any conceivable abuse in the matter of property concessions, but also his determination to establish strict supervision. Thus, the Colonial Charter itself, in its Article 15, lays down the fundamental rules governing cessions and concessions.

Thus, in the case of sales and leases involving more than 25 acres, the granting authorities must conform to general rules limiting their freedom of action. Such general rules apply, for example, to concessions of less than 1,250 acres saddled with certain costs. The same thing is true of cessions and concessions granted free of charge to establishments serving the public interest, or to scientific, philanthropic, and religious organizations when the transaction involves less than 25 acres of urban land or 500 acres of rural land. The rules apply also to certain free of charge cessions and concessions concerning at the most 12 1/2 acres of urban lands or 250 acres of rural lands granted to physical persons who undertake to exploit them. Besides, free of charge concessions of rural lands amounting to less than 1,250 acres can be given to former officials.

Aside from these precise cases — dealt with by authorities whose power is regulated — any cession or concession of lands lies outside the jurisdiction of the executive power and is referred to the legislative power: no transaction can be consummated except by virtue of a decree issued after the Colonial Council has taken up the matter. All the more so if the cessions exceed 25,000 acres; the drafts of the decrees granting such extensive stretches of land must be submitted to Parliament and left with it thirty days for its consideration.

## Registered Lands.

Once a piece of public land for which a concession was granted has been developed, full property rights can be conceded to the beneficiary. However, this change, in order to be valid, must be registered.

In the Congo the regime which guarantees the soundness of real estate transactions is inspired by the Torrens System. Thus, a change in the ownership of real estate cannot be brought about merely by an agreement between the parties concerned; in addition it requires the drawing up of a registration certificate. Such a certificate is delivered by the Conservateur des Titres Fonciers (Guardian of the Land Titles); there is such a Guardian in every province.

To make the system even sounder, various provisions are added to it. Briefly, they are as follows:

— First of all, the registration certificate cannot be drawn up except on the basis of an authentic instrument, and it cannot be delivered except after official measuring of the land by a qualified surveyor.

— Following this, the certificate is established in two copies, one of which remains in the custody of the Guardian, and may be consulted by the public. Such a proceeding assures publicity for the transaction and averts any danger of fraud due to alteration of the copy in the hands of the proprietor. Furthermore, except in case of duly established loss or destruction, a new certificate cannot in principle be delivered to the holder unless he surrenders the original document in his possession.

— The Civil Code stipulates that ownership and real estate rights exist only as they are described in the registration certificate, subject besides to easements and possible native rights; indeed, if at the time of the inquiry into the question of vacancy the natives reserved certain rights, these rights are stipulated in the certificate.

— Finally, the purchaser cannot retrocede his rights to the alienator unless they are still intact.

These provisions make the registration certificate a document that gives an absolute guarantee. It illustrates once more the determination of the Congolese legislator to see that real estate



law should always function in an atmosphere of security and respect for the rights of private parties. This security is assured especially by the publicity which is given to the measures actually taken or simply considered. This insistence on publicity is found even in various changes brought about by death : indeed, in the Congo the heir does not inherit ownership through the mere fact of the proprietor's death ; he must in addition be recognized as the owner by means of an order given by a magistrate.

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The determination to give maximum security to all appears as a predominant concern throughout the judicial process which, starting with lands considered a priori as of uncertain ownership, proceeds to recognize them as being either native lands or vacant lands and, after having integrated into the public domain lands recognized as vacant, transforms them into lands leased for a period of time or sold with full property rights.

At the outset, the inquiry into the question of vacancy sanctions the priority of native rights ; later, restrictions placed on the legal competency of the executive power guarantees private parties against the danger of monopoly and abuse stemming from large land concessions granted without adequate control. Finally, when the land reaches its ultimate juridical stage and passes with full property rights into the hands of private parties, a very extensive system of publicity and preservation of written documents assures the rights of everyone, those of the legitimate proprietor as well as those of other parties interested in one way or another in the land acquired.

## 2.

### The Waters.

#### A.

#### Principles.

In the tropics — perhaps more than elsewhere — water plays a decisive rôle in the economic progress of the country and in the health of the populations. The legislator in the Congo considers it a predominant element in the material well-being of the community ; with the aim of guaranteeing the use of it to everybody, he has not hesitated to limit the rights of landowners. He has therefore laid down the principle that the waters of the waterways, the lakes, and the subsoil do not belong to anyone, and that the right to use them is common to all, subject to restrictions imposed by the laws, the regulations, and certain concessions to private parties.

In the same spirit of solicitude for the public welfare, the pollution of water is forbidden. The Civil Code states that no one may change the course of a body of water or defile it ; the territorial administrators have the right to determine the zones of protection around springs, lakes, and waterways that supply drinking water. Numerous measures, enacted by the authorities, have put these rules in force.

In regard to the idea that water is property to be shared in common, the Civil Code stipulates furthermore that the owner of a piece of land has no privative right over any water to be found there. However, in certain cases, exceptions of one kind or another are permitted ; thus a proprietor who has on his land a spring capable of contributing only a trifling quantity of water to a stream may use it as he pleases.

As for the beds of a lake or a watercourse, they are always part of the public domain. Likewise in the public domain are the shores of lakes and of navigable or floatable watercourses, to a depth of thirty-three feet from the highest level reached by the waters at the time of their periodic rising.

Such are the principles that govern the juridical regime of the waters of the Colony.

## B.

### Concessions and Easements.

The authorities may grant to private parties the right to occupy the beds of lakes and watercourses, and also the right to utilize the waters. These concessions may be obtained for the purpose of producing motive power, or for agricultural or domestic use ; they may even be used merely for pleasure. However, in order to prevent abuses, such concessions — according to circumstances — fall within the competency of either the provincial governor, the governor general, or the King. But when it is a question of using 25 cubic meters of water per second or of producing a motive force of at least 5,000 hp., intervention by the legislative power is required.

The granting of such concessions may give the grantee the benefit of certain easements that weigh heavily on neighboring lands. For example, the concessionaire has the right, not only to build a dam or a levee, but even — by means of this dam or

levee — to submerge his neighbor's land ; moreover, he may set up on neighboring lands canalizations intended to bring or drain off water. It is obvious that such damage to private property cannot be justified except for serious reasons. Therefore these easements are always compensated by indemnities and must be the subject of authentic contracts ; in the absence of agreement between the parties, they must be decided by law.

Other easements exist independently of any concession, such as the right that the law gives a landowner to drain off — across neighboring lands — water that is on his own property. There is also a natural easement that results from the mere existence of water on a piece of land : the owners of lands situated on a lower level are bound to get the water that flows down naturally from lands on a higher level and they cannot object to this.

Indeed, the entire system sanctions the exceptional importance that Congolese law gives to water, its free use, and its rôle in the economic life of the country.



### 3. The Mines.

#### A. Principles.

In the Congo, the cession or concession of land does not confer on the beneficiary any property right to the subsoil. As a matter of fact, according to Congolese law, mines constitute a kind of property distinct from land ownership ; furthermore, mines are automatically considered the property of the Colony.

Therefore, any possibility of exploiting mines is dependent on a special act of concession. The only exception to this rule has been made in favor of the natives. Indeed, at the time of the arrival of the Europeans, the natives were exploiting little iron or copper lodes and, in order to protect their rights to these deposits, the authorities have permitted them — without any act of concession — to continue exploiting these mines under the same conditions as those prevailing at the time the decree of 1937, which organized the mining laws, was first enforced.

As it has done for the lands, the Colony has in some regions delegated its power of concession to certain organizations ; in this case, they are not only the Comité Spécial du Katanga and the Comité National du Kivu, but also the Compagnie des Chemins de Fer du Congo Supérieur aux Grands Lacs Africains (Upper Congo and Great African Lakes Railroad Company).

#### B. How Mining Concessions are Granted.

In respect to this matter, there are two possible systems : either a regime of agreements, or a regime of public prospecting based on the issuance of a series of permits. Both reveal a marked concern to exercise strict control. An agreement concerning a mining concession can be established only by the legislative power and it must perforce be the subject of a decree.

In the case of public prospecting, a decree must determine the areas open to such prospecting. A succession of permits, each more precise than the one preceding, follow the progress of the work from the stage of research to that of exploitation ; these permits are subjected to a system of publicity and of registration with the Guardian of Land Titles.

The permits are divided into four categories :

- The general prospecting permit
- The special prospecting permit
- The exploitation permit
- The treatment permit.

The **general prospecting permit** authorizes prospecting throughout the region declared open, except in certain zones protected by law, such as, for example the native villages or fields. A permit of this type is valid for two years and is delivered by the Guardian of Land Titles. It may be granted to companies or to private individuals. The companies to which the permit is delivered must be commercial enterprises or profit-making concerns, and they must have been established under the laws of the Colony. When permits are granted to private individuals, the latter must have been registered in the Congo or Ruanda-Urundi; however, an exception is allowed in favor of those natives of either who, although not registered, are nevertheless in possession of a card of civic merit.

When the bearer of the general permit has found indications of mineral wealth, he can obtain a **special prospecting permit**. This gives him exclusive prospecting rights, but these rights are limited to a polygonal plot of land measuring  $1 \frac{1}{4}$  miles on each side. This special permit is valid for two years and can be renewed three times under certain conditions.

At the time when the bearer of the special permit decides to begin extraction operations, he can obtain a third permit which is the **exploitation permit**. Here, as in the land regulations, the law has taken precautions to avoid the granting of excessive conces-

sions. If the concession involves a maximum of 2,000 acres, it can be granted by the governor general ; beyond that, by the legislative power. Moreover, these concessions are limited to thirty or fifty years according to the nature of the deposit, but they can be extended.

The exploitation permit is required not only by the bearer of the special permit, but also by those to whom areas for prospecting have been allocated under the regime of agreements. To obtain the exploitation permit, the applicant must make it cover a polygon inscribed either in the square where the special permit gives him exclusive prospecting rights, or in the area which was granted to him by virtue of an agreement. Furthermore, he must furnish proof of the mineralization of the land concerned and submit a plan of the concession applied for.

The **treating permit** is granted when the applicant asks, not for the right to extract, but only to treat ores obtained from mines already leased. It is delivered by the minister of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi.

## C. Rights of the Colony.

The principle previously mentioned, according to which mines are the property of the Colony, involves for the latter various privileges that are added to its right to grant concessions.

By virtue of these privileges, when the concession expires the Colony enters into all the rights of the holder of the exploitation permit, and thus comes into possession not only of the mines but also of all installations for extraction and mechanical preparation of the ores.



Furthermore, the Colony receives a share of the profits each year. This participation of the Colony in the profits derived from mining exploitation is calculated either on the basis of the capital invested or — in the case of a stock company — according to a sliding scale based on the ratio of the profits to the capital invested ; this participation can amount to as much as 50 % of the profits which exceed 35 % of the capital.

In addition, the Colony has the right to subscribe as much as 20 % of the capital of mining companies, and it may claim at any time the right to cast half as many votes as the company with respect to each type of security.

For its part, the minister of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi appoints one or two delegates who may exercise over mining companies all the rights of control and surveillance that normally appertain to directors and auditors.

Finally, the Colony may, in the general interest, limit, regularize, or centralize either production or sale ; besides, the government of the Colony — or the Belgian government if the former waives its prerogative — has a right of option which gives it priority for the purchase, at the regular price, of all or part of the mining production.

The Colony enjoys analogous prerogatives — royalties, regularization of production, priority in regard to purchasing — in cases where a mere treatment permit is concerned.

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Such are the broad outlines of the mining regulations applied to lands granted directly by the Colony.

A similar regime is enforced in regard to lands managed by the three concessionary organizations previously mentioned : the Comité Spécial du Katanga, the Comité National du Kivu, and the Compagnie des Chemins de Fer du Congo Supérieur aux Grands Lacs Africains. However, there are certain differences. Thus, the sums due as mining royalties belong to these organizations ; besides, the latter take over from the Colony the right to subscribe to the capital of the mining companies ; finally, agents of these organizations exercise the functions of Guardians of Land Titles.

## 4. The Forests.

### A. Protection and Classification of Congolese Forests.

Half of the Belgian Congo is covered with different kinds of forest ranging from the dense tropical forests to the sparsely wooded savannas. Barely 1,5 % of this area is being exploited ; this is explained by the fact that most of these forests are too far removed from the chief transportation facilities, and therefore their exploitation is not a paying proposition under existing conditions.

It would seem then, at first, that the Congolese forest, in view of this low degree of exploitation, is not in serious danger of being depleted and consequently is hardly in need of protective measures. Such is not the case. Indeed, on the one hand, the forests most exploited are those nearest the large centers, the waterways and the railroads. In such areas, signs of erosion are already visible and they are gradually becoming more alarming ; besides, disturbances in atmospheric precipitation have been noticed. Furthermore, every year thousands of acres of perennial forests are razed and burned to make room for crops that are necessary but that exhaust the poor soil of the tropics.

A number of reasons — agricultural, economic, climatic — have made indispensable protective legislation which finds its expression in the decree of April 11, 1949 establishing the Congolese Forest regime.

This rather complex regime applies to the native forests, the government-owned forests, the forests leased by the authorities to private parties, and finally to the forest lands under the control of the Comité Spécial du Katanga and the Comité National du Kivu. This regime does not apply to forests that constitute private property or to lands afforested by private parties. But it should be noted that even privileged owners are forbidden in principle to do any deforesting within a certain radius of springs or on slopes having an inclination of more than twenty degrees.

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The forests administered by the Comité Spécial du Katanga and the Comité National du Kivu are subjected to special regulations ; thus only certain provisions of the decree concerning forests apply to them, notably in regard to the protection of native rights.



The government-owned forests granted as concessions to private parties follow the long-lease and the area regulations set forth in the ordinance of June 16, 1947.

As for native and government-owned forests, they are entrusted directly to the government services. They are divided into two categories : classified forests and protected forests.

The classified forests include the government-owned reservations and certain wooded zones on which improvements are being made by natives ; they comprise also pieces of land which are being protected in the public interest — against erosion, for example.

All the other forests are considered « protected forests ».

The objective aimed at in classifying certain forests is not only to assure the protection of rare species of trees and the maintenance of the value of the forest-capital, but also to secure the improvement and the perenniality of this forest-capital. In the classified forests, agricultural operations, aside from those connected with forestry, are forbidden in principle, and the natives may not exercise any of their traditional rights there other than those stipulated in the classification ordinance. Such forests cannot be alienated, unless they have first been declassified by the governor general.

On the other hand, in regard to forests that are merely protected, the only measures applied are those inspired — in the interest of the populations — by the conservation of the soil and the preservation of its fertility. In these forests, whether native or government-owned, the traditional rights of the natives are respected and the latter may grow crops, except in cases where crop raising is forbidden in order to protect the forest itself ; moreover, certain exploitation privileges are granted by law to the natives.

## B.

### Exploitation of the Forests.

The exploitation of the forests can be done directly by cutting down trees, or indirectly by the purchase of wood already cut.

#### Direct Exploitation.

In the classified and in the native forests, exploitation takes place either following a public adjudication, or under government control when it is a question of supplying wood to government services or of improving a given forest.

In all the other forests subject to the forest regime, exploitation can take place only if a permit to cut wood has been granted.

This is a yearly permit and covers a maximum of 2,500 acres. But the area to which it applies within the limits set by this maximum depends on two factors. The first of these factors is the efficiency of the means of production that the holder of the permit disposes of. This makes it possible to favor the permit-holders who are properly equipped and to eliminate the forest pirates who work sporadically without adequate equipment. The second factor is a new idea introduced by the legislator : the idea of « possibility », viz., of the quantity of wood that can be taken annually from a forest without lessening its ability to go on producing income or endangering its « wood-capital », which

should be preserved intact. In the Congo, the government has been preparing a general inventory which will permit this « possibility » to be determined in the case of every forest area ; in regard to forests not covered by this inventory, or in cases where a premature exhaustion of forests is to be feared, the governor general may determine a provisional « possibility ». Thus, by taking into account this « possibility » whenever wood-cutting permits are granted, the authorities can assure the safety of the Congolese forest wealth.

This permit system is general and obligatory, although there are variations in the manner of applying it where the exploitation of mines and steamboat services is concerned. There are however, two exceptions.

First of all, in the protected forests — whether they are native or government-owned — those natives who do not need to pay a personal tax may freely and without a permit gather deadwood and cut firewood, either for their personal use or for sale ; they are also allowed to cut any amount of wood they need either for their personal use or to practice some native trade. The second exception is limited to the protected government-owned forests, but this exception applies to both natives and non-natives ; in these forests anyone may freely gather deadwood and cut firewood intended for domestic use.

In all cases, exploitation is itself subject to strict rules which aim at protecting the « forest-capital » and the economic life of the region. Thus, it is forbidden in principle to chop down trees that are too young or to cut trees down to the level of the ground. The forest must be exploited by successive sections, each having a predetermined area. Moreover, it is forbidden to abandon on the spot where they were cut any trees or even logs having a market value ; if this rule is infringed, authorization to exploit a new section will be refused.

## Indirect Exploitation.

Although the natives not subject to the personal tax may freely cut firewood, even for sale, no sale can take place unless the buyer is in possession of a purchasing licence at the time of the transaction. Both the natives subject to the personal tax, and the non-natives who wish to buy firewood or charcoal for industrial or commercial purposes must have previously obtained an authorization to do so from the provincial governor. Such authorizations, which are annual and in each case limited to forests enclosed within the boundaries of one single territory, are followed up by the issuance of a purchasing licence.

On the other hand, if firewood bought from the natives is intended solely for domestic use, the transaction takes place freely and is not subject to any formalities.

## The Fiscal System.

The issuance of the permit to cut wood is subject to the payment of a tax fixed by law. However, there are cases when the permit, while remaining obligatory, is delivered free of charge ; this is the case in the protected government-owned forests, in favor of both non-natives and natives paying the personal tax, when they wish to cut or gather the wood they need for building their dwellings or making their furniture.

The holders of permits for cutting wood must furthermore pay, every three months, certain proportional dues that vary not only with the quantity of wood chopped and the types of trees involved in the operation, but also according to the distance of the forests from important centers and low-cost transportation facilities. Here too, special provisions apply to those who exploit mines and steamboat services.



As in the case of the permit for cutting wood, the granting of a purchasing licence is subject to the payment of a tax and proportional dues. But in this case, 10 % of the proceeds of these dues are turned over to the funds of the native districts. This is considered as an income deriving from the exploitation of forests to which the natives have rights.

Finally, one last tax completes this system : the reforestation tax. Whatever may be the nature of the document authorizing the exploitation of the forests, this tax is always applicable ; it may go as high as 20 % of the total amount of the proportional dues. The sum collected through this tax is earmarked for a general program of reforestation that the government is carrying out all over the country.

## CHAPTER VI

# THE GOVERNMENT TECHNICAL SERVICES

## SUMMARY

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## 1.

### Technical Equipment.

In the Belgian Congo, the government services have made a direct contribution to the transformation of the country, either by taking a hand in its exploitation, or by creating the conditions needed to enable private initiative to prosper. Consequently, the government has not confined itself — as happens in more developed countries — to the task of co-ordinating, controlling, and supervising, but it has, in fact, played an active part.



This direct intervention of the government has made itself felt in the sanitary organization of the Colony and in its educational system, the industrial policy, agricultural development, basic equipment of rural communities, and social aid to the natives; in short, in the most varied aspects of Congolese life. It has acquired its full meaning in the carrying out of the Ten Year Plan. In fact, in many cases the government has created the economic substructure on which private undertakings have been grafted and have prospered. This is not a form of government enterprise, but a fruitful collaboration between government and private enterprise. (1)

In the special field of the technical equipment, the role of the government has been even greater, whether in connection with road-building, development of cities, navigability of water-courses, telecommunication networks, or research put at the service of the community. It is well worth while examining briefly the activities of these government technical services.

## A.

### Public Works and Urbanization.

The Public Works Service is one of the oldest and most important; the part it has played in the development of the country must be emphasized.

It opened a vast road network at a time private enterprise was still non-existent in the Congo. It put up dwellings, government buildings, and hospitals, drained marshes, built airports, etc. Even today when it is customary to have recourse to private industry, the Public Works Service continues to engage in certain activities in matters where private enterprise is either non-existent or not interested.

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(1) For details concerning the government's rôle in the equipment and development of the country, see a series of examples in Parts 4 and 5.

Moreover, this service controls navigation, maintains waterways in proper condition, and takes care of dredging and beaconing rivers. For these purposes it has at its disposal a flotilla of some three hundred units including dredgers, signal boats, tugboats, flatboats, etc. Among its most striking achievements mention must be made of the intensive dredging which has increased the anchorage depth from 12 to 30 feet in the maritime reach of the Congo River, and also of the installation of luminous beaconing which makes navigation by night possible on the river and on several of its affluents.

The functions of the Public Works Service also include civil aeronautics. It is in charge of the equipment and maintenance of airports, the control of air traffic and its safety in certain respects. Besides, it concerns itself with aeronautical inspection, the registration of aircraft and the issuance of certificates and licences.

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The giant strides that progress has made in the Congo during the last twenty years, the appearance of urban centers and their rapid growth, and the new concentrations of human beings have all brought up problems; the development of these agglomerations had to be facilitated by providing adequately for it. Thus urbanization became a pressing problem; it was officially introduced into the Congo by a decree issued in 1949 — and amended in 1957 — which undertakes to bring about local and regional improvements and puts forward a general plan for the entire country.

The preparation of these plans is taken care of by the urbanization services existing in each province and also within the central government. Before being adopted, they are submitted to inquiries conducted among the public and furthermore are subject to revision every 15 years. They meet the requirements of the present situation and also provide for future needs.

## B.

### Mail Service and Telecommunications.

From the time the Congo Free State was born, the basis of a postal service was laid down. Today, in addition to the regular boat, railroad, and air services, the network of postal deliveries aggregates some 19,000 miles and is serviced by motor vehicles, whaleboats, canoes, and cyclist courriers; the most distant points, the most secluded villages in the savannas and forests are thus speedily linked with the rest of the world. Every year over sixty million letters, printed matter items and parcels are handled by the Congolese postal service, as well as checks and money orders to the value of 25 million francs.

To this postal system created in 1885, telegraph was soon added. Indeed, since 1894, a telegraph line has been in operation between Boma and Matadi, and in 1898 was extended to Leopoldville. Later, wireless telegraphy was introduced into the Congo soon after it had been developed; as early as 1912, about ten wireless stations had been already established.

Today the telecommunication service operates throughout the Colony. Leopoldville is the pivot of a network that reaches every territory of the country by means of relaying zones and sectors; a system of relays between these zones and sectors and Leopoldville makes communication possible between various points in the Congo, and establishes a connection between various points and other African countries as well as other continents. This network now has 180 radio stations at its disposal. To these should be added 100 private stations, some of which supplement the government service.

In addition, there are about 40 telephone networks that are connected with each other and with foreign countries by radio-telephony.

For the transmission of news, the Belgian Congo communicates with about 15 countries by «telex». Finally, a photo-

telegraphic service was put into operation in 1955 after having functioned on an experimental basis during the war years; it makes possible the transmission of photos by radio between the Congo, Europe, and America. (1)

On the international level, the Congo has joined the Universal Postal Union; it has subscribed to the terms of the African Postal and Telecommunication Union, and also to those of the International Telecommunication Union. Besides, it has signed the Chicago Convention of December 7, 1944 concerning air navigation and the international organization of civil aeronautics.

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(1) The telecommunication service is also entrusted with the maintenance of government broadcasting stations. See Part 5, Chapter VI: «Cultural Life».



## 2. **Study and Research.**

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### **A. Geology and Hydrology.**

The exceptional wealth of the Congolese subsoil has given the geological service of the government a scientific rôle of first-rate importance. Its chief function is to make surveys in the domain of theoretical or applied geology, and to carry out all work relating to these surveys.

Co-operating with the official Bureau of Mines and with the geological bureau of the Comité Spécial du Katanga, the government's geological service takes an active part in the exploitation of the subsoil, sometimes by helping prospectors, sometimes by undertaking new prospecting work. Furthermore, it participates in preliminary studies of all government projects concerning the soil and the subsoil, and makes soundings and analyses with a view to studying soils and locating drinking water.

This service has set up an information center where the public has access to all the material gathered through research and through work still in progress. It publishes, at Leopoldville, a bulletin and reports relating to its scientific studies; the latter

contribute chiefly to the working out of a geological map of the Belgian Congo.

Within the Ministry of the Belgian Colony and Ruanda-Urundi, an advisory commission on colonial geology and a geological commission have been set up by royal decree. The former supervises chiefly the activities and organization of the geological service of the central government, while the latter publishes the geological map of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi.

### **B. Geodesy and Cartography.**

The first attempts to measure and delineate Congolese territory were made by 19th century explorers; at that time, the work was based on astronomical skeleton maps and on route surveys. The international mission entrusted with the task of delimiting the frontiers introduced the triangulation methods. The skeleton maps they drew have remained to this day the basis of the cartography of the Congo. As early as 1920 the Comité Spécial du Katanga contributed its share to the work undertaken by preparing the necessary surveys for the general topographical map of its domain. Thus, even before World War II, the maps made by the government services and the Comité Spécial du Katanga totaled 25 square degrees based on triangulation.

But the war brought new techniques that simplified the methods previously used and gave much more rapid results. These modern methods are now applied on a large scale by the Institut Géographique du Congo Belge (Geographical Institute of the Belgian Congo). This Institute was created in 1949 in the form of a government bureau recognized as a juristic person. It is entrusted with all official work in the fields of cartography and geodesy, and collaborates furthermore with the technical services of the granting authorities — the Comité Spécial du Katanga and

the Comité National du Kivu — on which certain obligations in this domain have been imposed. In addition, it helps in carrying out all the important work that the government sponsors for the benefit of the collectivity : cadastral surveys, plans of localities, pedological surveys, topographical studies necessary for public works, etc.

As early as 1950, the Geographical Institute undertook aerial photography of the entire country. The photos obtained make it possible to prepare, by simplified methods, planimetric maps and, with the aid of plotting apparatus, regular topographical maps in relief. This gigantic task involving an area of nearly a million square miles has been performed with remarkable efficiency.

The aerial surveys are immediately utilized in designing maps, photographic documents and technical pamphlets published by the Institute and placed at the public's disposal. The maps — which are drawn to scales ranging from 1/2,000 (1 centimeter to 2,000 centimeters) to 1/8,000,000 (1 centimeter to 8,000,000 centimeters) — cover various fields and are divided into categories filling precise needs : political and administrative maps, road and air maps, geological maps, and maps of urban centers, etc.

Completing this organization, a temporary service entrusted with the preparation and distribution of maps of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi was created in Belgium at the end of 1957.

## C.

### Geophysics and Meteorology.

The Belgian Congo is an active center for applied geophysics. It participated in the activities of the international geophysical year 1957-1958 which, thanks to systematic and co-ordinated observations made all over the world, has extended the boundaries of knowledge in regard to physics, both of the earth and of the

atmosphere. On this occasion, a station was set up at Coquilhatville for the study of the ionosphere by means of observations at high altitude.

The official meteorological and geophysical service, in addition to the central installations and the bureau of statistics located at Leopoldville, includes several regional centers and about 100 stations forming a synoptical and climatological network supplemented by more than 800 volunteer stations. The observations gathered by all these stations render permanent services in the most varied domains, whether it is a question of combating a plague of locusts, of protecting crops and electrical networks, or — in collaboration with telecommunications — of assuring the safety of aviation.

This service keeps continuously in contact with the Institut pour la Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale (Institute for Scientific Research in Central Africa) and with the Institut National pour l'Etude Agronomique du Congo Belge (National Institute for the Agronomical Study of the Belgian Congo). It brings out various technical publications, such as « Ionospheric Forecasts » for the Congo, a bulletin giving ionospheric data, a yearbook of astronomical, climatological, and geophysical information, and a bulletin containing facts about climatology, radiation, aerology, and magnetism.

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**Note :** The government technical services have organized technical schools for training the native personnel needed. Among these are schools for post-office employees, telecommunication personnel, meteorological observers, surveyors, assistants to airport directors, etc. They are intended for adults who have completed at least the first stage of secondary education and have been selected for their aptitudes ; the courses are given by experts who apply the most up-to-date methods of technical instruction.



CHAPTER VII  
**GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED  
ORGANIZATIONS**

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## 1.

### General View.

Alongside the government services, various organizations have been created that are grouped under the general and rather vague heading of « parastataux » (government-sponsored).

They came into existence as a result of special circumstances. Certain undertakings connected with the general welfare have often proved too vast, too complex, or too costly to be carried out exclusively by government services, and thus it was decided to unite both public and private efforts and capital in special organizations entrusted with definite functions. In order that efficiency and smoothness of execution might be assured, these organizations were freed, to a degree that varied according to the case, from the rigidity of government regulations, although the government's right to intervene and supervise was maintained.

Such organizations are numerous in Congolese life and they are found at work in the most varied spheres. Sometimes they



are scientific institutions like the « Institut pour l'Etude Agronomique du Congo Belge » (Institute for the Agronomical Study of the Belgian Congo), or the « Institut pour la Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale » (Institute for Scientific Research in Central Africa); sometimes social institutions like the « Fonds Reine Elizabeth pour l'Assistance Médicale aux Indigènes » (Queen Elizabeth Fund for Medical Aid to the Natives), the « Fonds du Bien-Etre Indigène » (Native Welfare Fund), or the « Office des Cités Africaines » (Office for African Cities); at times they are public services such as the « Régie des Distributions d'Eau et d'Electricité » (Government Service for the Distribution of Water and Electricity), and the « Office d'Exploitation des Transports Coloniaux » (Colonial Transportation Office). There are also some financial organizations such as the Central Bank, the « Caisse d'Epargne » (Government Savings Bank), or the Société de Crédit au Colonat et à l'Industrie » (Credit Bank for the Colonat and for Industry). Social security, information, basic equipment, and credit — all these matters have likewise been entrusted to similar organizations. Indeed, whenever it was necessary, the government has had recourse to the formula which would produce the best results; it has thus applied a pragmatic policy to such an extent that each of these organizations represents a special case governed by a special statute.

However, an attempt has been made to classify these organizations according to their structure by dividing them in five main categories: government-controlled services, government agencies, government institutions, subsidized companies, and finally, the cession and concession granting authorities. However, their strong individual features make it difficult in some instances to determine the category in which they belong; therefore, there are borderline cases that remain unclassifiable but are nevertheless covered by the general term « parastataux ». (1).

(1) In the second volume, see the list of government-sponsored organizations concerned with the Congo.

The degree to which these « parastataux » are freed from government control may vary from a mere relaxation of control in their administration to a transfer of certain powers of sovereignty, as in the case of the « cession and concession granting authorities ».

There are three such authorities: the « Comité Spécial du Katanga » (Special Committee for Katanga), the « Compagnie des Chemins de Fer du Congo Supérieur aux Grands Lacs Africains » (Upper Congo and Great African Lakes Railroad Company), and the « Comité National du Kivu » (National Committee for Kivu).

They were created to permit the rapid exploitation of vast regions and, in compensation for the expenses incurred by them in occupying, administering, and developing these areas, they received various advantages such as exclusive rights over certain natural resources or the ownership of immense territories where they exercise sovereign rights of cession or concession of land. They have played and continue to play a rôle of the first importance in the life of the Congo.

## 2.

### **The Cession and Concession Granting Authorities.**

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#### **A.**

#### **Le Comité Spécial du Katanga (Special Committee for Katanga)**

The Comité Spécial du Katanga was born of rather unusual historical circumstances. By the end of the last century, it had become plainly urgent for the Congo Free State to assert its rights over Katanga by establishing an effective occupation there ; besides, this was one of the obligations imposed upon the Congo Free State at the time it was established by the General Act of Berlin. However, since Leopold II did not have adequate means at his disposal, he signed an agreement with a private group which undertook to create a company — the Compagnie du Katanga — entrusted with the tasks of occupying the region and administering it in the name of the Congo Free State. In exchange, this company was to receive, in addition to its mining rights, ownership of a third of the public lands.

But when it came to delimiting the lands that would remain government property and those that would be given to the company, practical difficulties arose. Indeed, delimitation had been planned according to a chess board pattern based on meridians of longitude and parallels of latitude ; but the actual partitioning of the land according to such a pattern proved to be very difficult.

In view of this situation, it was agreed to create an organization which would manage the land jointly owned by the government and the company ; such was the origin of the Comité Spécial du Katanga, founded in 1900 (1).

After having enjoyed until 1910 executive power which gave it authority to govern the region, the Comité Spécial du Katanga had its rôle reduced to that of exploiting the lands and mines within its jurisdiction. This exceeds 115,000,000 acres.

Throughout this vast domain, the Committee enjoys the prerogative of granting cessions and concessions : it exercises public rights over lands, forests, and mines, and it collects all the taxes, royalties, or rents that proceed from them. It has at the same time favored the establishment of the « colonat » by extending assistance to the colonists of the region in various ways. Moreover, in its sphere of activity, the Committee has set up certain services in the public interest : bureaus for geodetical, geological, and geographical research, veterinary services, experimental farms, etc.

The Comité Spécial du Katanga was chartered for a period of 99 years. Its administratorship will expire on June 19, 1999, and its mining rights on March 12, 1990. However, the government has the right to prolong its existence for an equal period of time and under the same conditions.

The direction of the Committee is entrusted to six members, four of which are appointed by the government and two by the

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(1) Generally known by its initials : C.S.K.



Compagnie du Katanga. The profits are divided between the contracting parties in proportion to the capital invested, that is ; a third going to the company and two-thirds to the government.

The entire history of the remarkable development of Katanga since the beginning of the century is closely linked to the existence and the action of this Committee.

## B.

### **La Compagnie des Chemins de Fer du Congo Supérieur aux Grands Lacs Africains** (The Upper Congo and Great African Lakes Railroad Company)

While the Comité Spécial du Katanga and the Comité National du Kivu have the authority to grant cessions and concessions of public lands, the Compagnie des Chemins de Fer du Congo Supérieur aux Grands Lacs Africains has only the right to grant mining concessions. (1)

It secured this right in 1902, when it signed certain agreements with the Congo Free State. At that time, the Company was entrusted with the task of building railroad lines in the East of the country in order to connect the non-navigable sections of the Lualaba, and also link the latter to the Nile and to Lake Tanganika. This initial program thus involved the construction of four lines, but in 1936 the link with the Nile was dropped and the program was reduced to building the Stanleyville-Ponthierville, Kindu-Kabalo, Kabalo-Albertville sections, all of which have been constructed.

In exchange for these obligations, the Company received very important compensations.

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(1) This railroad company is generally called by its initials : C.F.L.

First of all, grants of land ; indeed, the Company was given full ownership of vast stretches of land, but after several modifications their area was cut down to 500,000 acres. The chief cause of this reduction was the setting up of the Comité National du Kivu, for which some land was to be made available ; however, as compensation, the C.F.L. was granted the right to become a member of this new committee. It should however be noted that, although a landowner, the C.F.L. has not received any authority to make land grants ; nevertheless, it may establish subsidiary companies to exploit some of its domain or, with the agreement of the minister of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, contribute parts of it as its share in business partnerships.

As for mining rights, the government has delegated to the Company until the end of the year 2011 its authority to lease mines anywhere within an immense domain covering more than 46,000 square miles. Moreover, the Company benefits by taxes levied on the issuance of mining permits and royalties paid by concessionaires ; besides, it enjoys the right to subscribe one-fifth of the total amount of shares of stock in mining concerns located within its domain, and also in certain mining enterprises controlled by the Comité National du Kivu. In the Congo, prospecting permits are delivered by a representative of the Company, whereas the delivery of exploitation permits follows the regular rules laid down by mining legislation. Furthermore, a Mining Committee has been established in Brussels which examines applications for exploitation permits and proposed statutes of concessionaires ; this Committee consists of four members of whom two are appointed by the Company and two by the minister of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi.

## C.

### **Le Comité National du Kivu ”** ( National Committee for Kivu)

Shortly after World War I, at a time when the Congo was making great economic progress, it became evident that Kivu was a rich region, adapted to the growing of certain specialized

crops and well fitted by its climate to accommodate a large European « colonat ». The government wanted to increase the number of Belgian nationals settling in Kivu, and to improve existing conditions in order to help Belgian farmers who wished to establish themselves in the region. Alongside these objectives, the government intended to develop native agriculture.

However, certain difficulties stood in the way of these projects : they were at one and the same time the necessity of investing a large amount of capital and the existence of land privileges granted to the C.F.L. on the basis of previous agreements, land privileges covering some areas situated in Kivu.

To eliminate these difficulties, a formula was applied which was patterned on the one used in creating the « Comité Spécial du Katanga » ; and thus, in 1928 the « Comité National du Kivu » was set up (1). The latter includes three categories of members ; the Colony, the C.F.L. which was accepted as a member in exchange for relinquishing its privileges in the areas turned over to the Committee, and approved members, subscribers of capital in cash. It should be noted that in order to preserve the national character of the Committee, the approved members may be only Belgian or Congolese juristic persons, and that their shares are transferable only with certain guarantees.

The Comité National du Kivu is entrusted, in the general interest, with the tasks of exploiting lands belonging to the Colony and mines that have not yet been leased, and also of promoting agriculture, the « colonat », etc. In carrying out these tasks, it adheres to the policy of the government, and the minister of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi may oppose any act he considers contrary to the general interest or to the stipulations of the organic decree concerned. Moreover, the government has reserved for itself certain rights, among others that of deciding everything concerning the native lands.

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(1) Known as the « C.N.Ki ».

Since the founding of the Comité National du Kivu, both its statute and the boundaries of its domain have been modified several times ; today a royal decision dating from 1950 co-ordinates previous provisions and governs its functions.

Here are the rights conferred upon the Committee : From the point of view of land, the Committee replaces the local authorities for selling and leasing the public lands within an area of 750,000 acres located in Kivu ; from the point of view of forests, it has the right to exploit and manage the public forest lands until the year 2011, but within boundaries corresponding on the whole to those of its domain ; it has the same right, but only until 1965, within a zone of 1,375,000 acres stretching to the west as far as the Lualaba. In regard to mines, the Committee is — within its domain — both a granting authority and a juristic concessionaire, and thus is able to exploit its mining wealth.

The Comité National du Kivu is administered simultaneously by a management council and a board of directors. The management council consists of ten members, five of whom are appointed by the minister of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, one by the C.F.L., and four by the approved members. As for the board of directors, its composition may vary according to internal regulations.

The annual general assembly of all the interested parties is presided over by the minister or his deputy ; the Colony has a deciding vote, and the C.F.L. has a number of votes equal to half those of all the other parties.

The profits are divided in a rather unusual way. First, interest is paid on the capital — either called up or paid in ; then certain sums are allocated to the Fonds de Réserve » (Reserve Fund), and to the « Fonds Social du Kivu » (Social Fund of Kivu) which the Committee has created for the benefit of the natives ; the balance is shared on a basis of three-tenths for the Colony, three-tenths for the C.F.L., and four-tenths for the approved members.



**PART IV**  
**ECONOMIC**  
**ASPECTS**

CHAPTER I  
**INVESTMENTS  
AND THE  
NATIONAL INCOME**



## SUMMARY

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## 1.

### Capital investments.

Whether it is a question of exploiting the enormous wealth of its soil, subsoil, or watercourses, or of raising the standard of living or the purchasing capacity of its inhabitants, the Congo is a country which, because of the immensity of its resources, fully justifies great investments of capital.

However, for a long time investing was slow and hesitant in pace. During the last century, and even at the beginning of this one, the Congo often appeared as an economic adventure. It was necessary first of all to explore the territory, to discover and take stock of its wealth, to create guarantees of stability and good returns on investments which would progressively win the confidence of great enterprises. But after this confidence had been won and the first substructure of the country established, the rhythm of investment proceeded at a steadily accelerating pace. Two facts will give an idea of the development of capital invested in the Congo : during the entire period prior to 1928, an average of one billion francs — present-day value of the franc — was invested there each year ; since 1948, about eleven billion francs have been invested in the country every year.

It is estimated that as of today the investments in the Congo amount to some 130 billion francs. About 100 billion are private

investments; the chief fields favored by investors have been, first of all, commerce and banking (31 %); then transportation (21 %), and mines (17 %); and finally, manufacturing industries (13 %), and agriculture (12 %). The government, on its part, has contributed some 30 billion francs for the creation of an economic and social substructure in the form of harbors, roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, etc.

No discrimination favors the capital coming from the mother country. Indeed, the open door policy imposed by the international treaties applies not only to merchandise but also to capital. But, as a matter of fact, the great mass of the capital comes from Belgium; this is explained by the financial and economic ties that link the Congo intimately with the mother country. Out of the capital invested in the Congo, 41 % represents Belgian contributions, only 4 % foreign contributions, and 55 % consists of amounts supplied by enterprises that finance themselves. This kind of self-financing is assuming a more and more important place in the Congolese economy. Before 1928, the proportion of reinvested capital was 10 %; today it is as high as 60 %. However, a large part of this reinvested capital is still of foreign origin; indeed, it belongs to capitalists — chiefly Belgian — who have sacrificed a part of their dividends in order to reinvest them in the Congolese economy.

At the present stage of development, the investment market, like the money market, is highly concentrated: a few groups monopolize the financing of a large part of the economic activities. As in practice there is a separation between commercial banks and savings banks, long-term financing of Congolese enterprises is taken care of by financial companies who acquire holdings; these holdings almost always represent extensions in the Congo of the activities of Belgian and foreign financial groups. In certain cases, chartered organizations such as the Comité Spécial du Katanga (Special Committee for Katanga), the Comité National du Kivu (National Committee for Kivu), and the Compagnie des Chemins de Fer du Congo Supérieur aux Grands Lacs Africains (Upper Congo and Great African Lakes Railroad Company) have both private and public holdings.

## 2.

### Evolution of the National Income.

Between 1950 and 1956 the national income — viz., the sum total of the resources of the Congolese economy taken as a whole — has increased by 69 %. In 1956 it amounted to more than 49 billion francs. The mining and agricultural sectors contribute the most important part, more than half of the resources of the Congolese economy. They are followed, in order of importance, by the manufacturing industries, transports, and the administrative departments.

This increase in the Congolese national income — which averages more than 10 % a year — is extremely high. It has been calculated, in fact, that in industrial countries such as Belgium the annual average is from 3 to 5 %.

Such spectacular progress is a result, at one and the same time, of the development of production, the prosperity of foreign trade, and the expansion of home trade. Doubtless it also reflects price rises — in the market — but, nevertheless, it is certain that the Congolese national income has increased at an amazing rate.



This rise in the national income has been beneficial, not only to European enterprises and salaried employees, but also to the natives, who have seen their purchasing power follow the same upward trend. The improvement in the standard of living appears clearly in the following facts : in 1950, the income of the European economy — including that of the state — represented 54 % of the national income, and native income amounted to only 46 % ; six years later these percentages were reversed, the European economy contributing only 46 % while the native economy represented 54 %. In this evolution an important part has certainly been played by increases in salaries. During the same period the cost of labor has gone up by more than 120 %, and such an increase certainly exceeds the rise in the income of the native enterprises. However, the latter are also experiencing evident prosperity and the contribution made to the Congolese economy by the independent native producers is steadily on the increase.

## CHAPTER II

# COMMERCE

## SUMMARY

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## 1.

### The Home Market.

In the Congolese economy of today, foreign trade has a predominant place. This is understandable because the Congo needs to dispose of its raw materials on the world markets in order to get the manufactured products indispensable for its development.

Thus we see that the Congo's economy is vulnerable, because it depends essentially on the need foreign countries have of raw materials. But even worse, this situation represents a serious disadvantage for the country. Indeed, the world markets are subject to profound and unforeseeable fluctuations. These fluctuations, often sudden, create disturbances in the countries that produce raw materials — a drop in purchase prices, a decrease in salaries, unemployment — that the natives do not understand; the ultimate result is an atmosphere detrimental to a healthy economy.

Consequently, the government has adopted a policy tending to favor the creation and expansion of a home market that will make the economic life of the country more independent of



foreign influences. This policy, which finds its most striking expression in the setting up of the Ten Year Plan (1), has already borne its first fruits: between 1950 and 1955, the percentage of business activities concerning themselves with the foreign markets has decreased from 35 to 28 %.

What are the currents that feed the young home market of the Congo?

Primitive trade by barter has been gradually replaced by retail trade in stores and trading posts; at first concentrated in the larger population centers, it has extended more and more toward the rural areas so as to integrate practically the entire country in a system of monetary exchanges. It has been supplemented by a kind of itinerant trading which will gradually die out as the more remote regions of the country are supplied with stores. At the same time, markets have been organized, some intended to supply the natives with food products, others intended for the provisioning of great industrial enterprises.

The industrialization and urbanization of the Congo have been the chief factors that have stirred up the major currents of home trade. Indeed, the urban, industrial, and mining centers have created a demand for food products intended to supply city dwellers and workers. Thus the installations of the Mining Union of Upper Katanga get their provisions in Kasai, and Leopoldville absorbs the food produced by the Lower Congo and Kwango. This current once started, the larger population centers themselves have deemed it more profitable to offer for commercial exchanges products manufactured on the spot and not, as formerly, imported.

The introduction of manufacturing has been encouraged by another factor. Since Belgian manufacturers do not benefit by any preferential treatment in their export business, they have been led to establish branches in the Congo itself. And so, alongside numerous industries that work for the export trade, factories

have sprung up that take care of local consumption. Today the Congo brings to its own home market its textiles, sugar, beer, soap, cement, construction materials, etc. The result has been a great increase in local trading: for example, between Matadi and Leopoldville this trade has doubled within a period of a few years, increasing from 1,500,000 tons in 1950 to 3,000,000 in 1956.

At the same time, another and older current was getting stronger. An ever increasing percentage of the natives' agricultural output, especially in food products, was passing from the rudimentary stage of family consumption to the higher level of sale in the local and regional markets. The new organizations of the native peasantry are destined to play a more and more important part in this domain.

Finally, the home market has even benefited, especially in the eastern regions, by the rise of local tourism which supplements the increasing international tourism.

To be sure, the Congo's home market is still in its infancy. It has already taken shape but is yet to be developed and stabilized, especially by stimulating home production, agricultural as well as industrial. This will be the major objective of the Belgian Congo's second Ten Year Plan.

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(1) See later the chapter devoted to the Ten Year Plans.

## 2. Foreign Trade.

The Belgian Congo's foreign trade — which remains the foundation and the goal of most of its economic activities — has this peculiarity : it is very independent of the mother country's foreign trade. While other African territories are enclosed in national zones that are more or less shut up within protective systems — and therefore have an artificial character — the Belgian Congo is normally capable of producing at the prices that prevail in the international market.

International competition has obliged Congolese producers to organize and equip themselves adequately. At the same time, the absence of any preferential treatment has led the Belgian manufacturers to install factories in the Congo. The result has been an industrialization which is today the most progressive in Central Africa. On the other hand, the open door policy in the Congo has enabled customers to buy at the most advantageous prices.

## Exports.

Congolese exports, which are sent to numerous countries, are characterized by a constant increase in quantity and a constant improvement in quality.

Based at first on the simple gathering of plants growing wild, export then turned to agricultural and mining production. At the same time, the products were diversified and improved, not only by selection and conditioning, but also by more complete processing. Simultaneously with the improved quality of the merchandise, the sales on the world markets had a striking increase. From 1950 to 1956, export rose 65 % in quantity and 103 % in value. Almost all of the products were comprised in this expansion, with the exception of gold, tin and cotton : gold and tin were affected by the low prices on the world markets and cotton production is being absorbed in increasing quantities by the local textile factories.

In 1956, export rose to one and a half million tons, representing a value of 27 billion francs. Out of this total, agricultural products were responsible for 49 % of the tonnage and 35 % of the value : mining products ; 48 % of the tonnage and 46 % of the value, while the industrial products represented 2 % in tonnage and 1 % in value.

The chief mining products exported by the Congo comprise copper, cobalt, diamonds, cassiterite, tin, gold, zinc, manganese, tungsten, cadmium and rare earth metals.

The leading exported agricultural products are coffee, cotton, rubber, lumber, palm oil, palmetto nuts and oil, as well as cacao, copal, urena, fibre, corn, cassava, pyrethrum, cinchona, cottonseed oil and peanut oil.

The industrial export products include cotton bales and cotton fabrics. Animal products must also be mentioned, such as hides and ivory.



The export products are shipped to many different points. The foremost buyer is Belgium, who absorbs a fourth of the entire export products. Although the Belgian market is somewhat limited and is in no way given to national protectionism, Belgium is nevertheless able to maintain this privileged position, thanks to the large quantities she imports and the close ties that exist between the Colony and the mother country. The U.S.A. ranks second, buying over a fifth of the Congo's export : then follow France and her overseas territories, Great Britain and Federal Germany.

It should be noted that a considerable part of the products exported to Belgium are sent there to be marketed in Antwerp or processed in the metallurgical factories. The foreign currencies that these operations bring in then return to the Belgian Congo and thus make it possible to establish the real destination of the exports.

### Imports.

Simultaneously with the increase in exports and the general economic expansion, the volume of imports doubled between 1950 and 1956. During 1956, Congolese imports amounted to 1,700,000 tons representing a value of more than 20,000,000,000 francs.

Between 1950 and 1956, the importation of supplies such as coal, mineral oils, construction materials, etc., required by the development of transportation means and by industry has increased by 20 %. Private investments and the substructural work done by the government have brought about an increase of 40 % in the importation of capital goods. As for consumer goods, in spite of the increase in the supplies furnished by local industry, their importation has also increased by 40 % in volume.

The principal products imported are iron, cast iron, steel, boilers, mechanical machines and engines, motor vehicles, bicycles, mineral combustibles, electrical apparatus and textiles.

Belgium and Luxembourg head the list of exporter countries to the Congo which they supply with more than one-third of the required goods. The United States is second, furnishing one-fifth. Germany, Great Britain, and South Africa come next.

### The Trade Balance and the Financial Balance.

The trade balance and the financial balance are calculated in the aggregate for the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi because of the customs, economic, and monetary union that exists between these territories.

**The trade balance**, which shows the surplus or deficit of exports as compared with imports, has been favorable uninterruptedly since 1931. The surpluses have amounted to several billion francs during the past few years. Such a favorable situation has its origin not only in the difference between the volume of goods imported and that exported, but also in a favorable evolution in the market prices of Congolese raw materials together with a decrease in the unit prices of the imports.

**The financial balance**, or payments balance, groups together foreign transactions, visible or invisible, of the Belgian territories of Africa. Like foreign trade, it is subject to sharp fluctuations in world market prices of raw materials.

Thus, after having shown a surplus from 1950 to 1955, it was reduced to a simple balance in 1956, due to a less favorable situation on the world markets at that time : in 1957, the serious world recession, together with the absence of a new inflow of capital, caused a deficit of over 7 billion francs. This sum included a number of very varied internal deficits appearing in the transactions of short-term private capital invested in transportation, insurance, pensions, European administration, etc. But transactions in merchandise, whose surpluses appear in the trade balance, make up for these deficits. Likewise, in the sum total of long-term capital, the occasional deficit in private capital is offset by the permanent surplus in public capital.

The partial balances by monetary zones reveal a chronic deficit as far as Belgium is concerned. The foreign currency balance with regard to the European Payments Union also shows a deficit — except for the pound. On the other hand, counterbalancing these deficits, sizable surpluses accumulate in gold, dollars, pounds, and various other currencies. The Central Bank settles the partial deficits by means of arbitration among the various items in its foreign currency reserve, chiefly by selling dollars and pounds for Belgian francs.

### CHAPTER III

## THE AGRICULTURAL POLICY



## SUMMARY

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## 1.

### Evolution of Congolese Agriculture.

#### A.

#### The Problems of Congolese Agriculture.

Even before 1908, the Congo Free State had embarked upon an agricultural policy. However, it was doomed to failure. Vast plantations of coffee, cacao, lianas, and rubber trees had been created ; there were millions of plants in all. But, in the hands of inexperienced personnel, almost totally ignorant of conditions peculiar to the country, this operation ended in failure.

When, in 1908, Belgium took over the responsibility for the Congo from King Leopold II, she found herself confronted with a task which might yield results after a long time, but which from the start proved to be difficult and complex. Agriculture in the African tropics involved at that time important and unforeseen technical difficulties. The area of the country was immense and its population scattered ; cattle was rare, and the harness unknown ; climatic conditions varied from one region to another ; and to top it all, the exploitation of the soil by the natives was definitely rudimentary.

As a matter of fact, the native was satisfied to cultivate the soil, to exhaust it after harvesting a few crops, and then to abandon it, move on, and look for new land. For want of proper care the soil quickly deteriorated, destroyed in one place by erosion and in another by layers of laterite.

Furthermore, the semi-nomad plowman had no conception of what either profit or saving meant; his only concern was to grow just what he needed to live on. However, even at that he did not produce enough to meet his needs for more than a few months. For the rest of the year he hunted, fished, and gathered roots and wild fruits; but in spite of this he did not find the minimum quantity of food he required. On the whole, the population was undernourished.

Conditions at the start were therefore unfavorable. Needless to say, technicians were rare and resources limited.

The most urgent problem to solve was this chronic undernourishment of the natives. They had to be made to grow new and diversified crops, and on a sufficiently large scale; they had to be taught to take good care of their own soil, study it, and find out what were the most efficient methods of crop rotation. It was essential to induce them to raise crops that would yield a good return and thus better their economic condition; but in order to do this, it was necessary to stimulate in them the desire to improve their standard of living. Provisioning for the new urban populations and the agglomerations of workers had also to be assured. Finally, a system had to be created that would give the native economy everything that was lacking in it: capital, techniques, industrial equipment and know-how, and markets. This system could be put in operation only if colonists settled down and agricultural corporations were established.

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As early as 1910, an agricultural service was established within the local government. It immediately embarked on a study of the country's natural conditions: nature of the soil, flora and

fauna, climates of the various regions. This study, based from the start on scientific research, depended on laboratories, meteorological stations, and experiment centers.

At the same time, the government set out to overcome the first handicap, which was the lack of agricultural activity on the part of the natives. In 1917, an ordinance-law required the members of the tribal communities to grow each year — for their own profit — either food crops or other marketable products. This method had a decisive influence on the direction in which Congolese agriculture developed.

Furthermore, Belgian capital, which until then had been invested chiefly in the Far East, now came to take an interest in the agricultural resources of the Congo. After World War I, and especially after 1924, the rise in the market prices of agricultural products and the favorable results obtained by the government research establishments, where the Para rubber tree, coffee, cacao, and the elaeis palm tree were being cultivated, had caused a sudden enthusiasm for Congolese agriculture. As a result, numerous agricultural enterprises sprang into existence, the weakest of which disappeared at the time of the world-wide depression.

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However, at the time these first results — the perfecting of scientific methods, the appearance of native farmers on the economic scene, the contribution of European experience and capital — had just been secured, a new problem arose.

When the cultivation of agricultural products for export was introduced into the customary rotation of crops, the time during which the land was laid fallow had, in many places, to be shortened; consequently, the fertility of the soil was gravely compromised. This fact constituted a latent danger that might soon produce ill effects, not only in the economic sphere but especially from a social point of view.



At that time, an event occurred that was to have immense repercussions on Congolese agriculture; the speech made by Prince Leopold in the Senate in 1933 on his return from journeys to the Dutch East Indies and the Belgian Congo. This speech set forth principles which, down to the present time, have dominated the evolution of the methods employed in the Congo.

Prince Leopold declared that «the future belongs to those colonies where the land is cultivated under the most economical conditions». This statement stressed the importance of agriculture, especially native agriculture. In regard to the latter, he said: «Production will be assured by the native who will no longer be a salaried worker but a free peasant, the proprietor of his land». Insisting on this fundamental idea of the «free peasant», the Prince emphasized the importance of «promoting the native farming community developments in their most complete form, in order to permit the native to become a landowner and enjoy the economic freedom guaranteed to him by our Colonial Charter».

In order to assure agriculture of the rational and progressive development desired, a wider appeal had first to be made to the resources of science.

In the course of that same year, 1933, the Institut National pour l'Etude Agronomique du Congo Belge (National Institute for the Agronomical Study of the Belgian Congo) — known under the name of INEAC — was founded. At the same time, the expansion of the rural economy became the basic objective of the government agricultural services.

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From that time on, the expansion of agriculture was pursued according to two plans that were parallel and complementary.

On the one hand, INEAC directs its activities towards basic research and the application of scientific knowledge in such a way as to serve the economic and social development of the

country. INEAC is thus carrying out a vast program of agronomical selections and researches which has led to a great increase in agricultural productivity.

On the other hand, the government is working out practical action. But whether it is a question of making new techniques known, furnishing selected seeds and plants to the tribal communities, establishing agricultural centers, keeping check on the progress of the crops or improving instruction in the field of agriculture, the government's action is always based on the scientific work of INEAC.

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During World War II, Congolese agriculture, which Belgium had originally found in the primitive state of a local activity serving as a mere means of subsistence, already played a foremost rôle in the provisioning of the Allied nations.

After the interlude of this war effort, the policy of the Belgian government was again concentrated on all the measures calculated to improve the standard of living of the rural areas. Thanks to the Ten Year Plan, it has been possible to establish this policy on firm bases, and especially to succeed in creating the native farming developments, an aim that was first formulated in 1933.

The creation of the native farming developments had three goals: agricultural, economic, and social. On the agricultural level, it was a question of stabilizing the rural populations by replacing the former extensive and semi-nomad agriculture by an intensive and rationally organized agriculture. On the economic level, the aim was to increase rural production and make this productive effort profitable. On the social level, the plan provided for the establishment of communities that would be offered satisfactory moral and material living conditions.

This was a long, arduous task which required meticulous preparation. In the regions where such a farming development was to be organized, the soil had first to be studied, boundaries marked out, and sites chosen where each peasant would be allotted a parcel of land on which he could set up his farm and grow food crops and other marketable products according to a carefully worked out system of rotation. Furthermore, the customs of the tribes had to be respected, and, if necessary, the local customs had to be observed. The native farming development is not a rigid formula applied uniformly throughout the Congo; it varies with different regions, presenting decidedly individualistic features in one place, and elsewhere a collectivistic attitude approaching the mentality of the clan.

Today this program has become a reality to a considerable extent. It provided for the settlement of 500,000 peasants: one-third of these are already on their farms. For their benefit, thousands of miles of local roads have been built and centers with schools and dispensaries set up; hundreds of springs have been tapped and wells have been dug; tens of thousands of artificial ponds intended for fish breeding have been created and, in various places, cattle gathered for reproductive purposes; finally, to assure this young movement of economic advantages, co-operatives of « peasant producers » have been established.

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But putting this program in operation raises new problems: a technical problem and a social one.

In regard to the technical problem, it is not enough to stabilize the condition of the native Congolese farmer. Once he has settled down on his new land, the quantity and the value of his agricultural output must be increased, and to achieve this result the most modern methods and equipment must be put at his disposal: mechanized implements for field work: the use of mineral fertilizer, and phytosanitary treatment of the plantations.

As for the social problem, the creation of the native farming developments does not constitute an end in itself, but a beginning. This development is above all a substructure upon which will be established, thanks to modernized agriculture, a new social class destined to play an essential rôle in the stability of the Congo of tomorrow. (1)

A start has already been made on finding solutions for these new problems. Thus begins a new phase in the evolution of the country.

## B. Results Obtained.

Scientific research conducted by INEAC and followed up by a program of government propaganda — such is the procedure on which Congolese agricultural progress has been based for a quarter of a century.

A few facts will serve to illustrate the results of this policy.

## Results of Scientific Research.

In the course of these past twenty-five years, INEAC has made use of various branches of knowledge: botany, ecology, genetics, selection, phytopathology, technology, agricultural chemistry, rural engineering, etc. It has perfected numerous

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(1) See Part 4, Chapter X, Section 2: « The Native Independent Class ».



techniques in agriculture and grazing ; devised sanitary methods and elaborated plans for agricultural propaganda ; introduced better means of production and the use of fertilizer and machinery. In short, INEAC is responsible for the basic conception of the native farming developments.

It has come to the aid of planters and cattle breeders by furnishing them with saplings and animals carefully selected and adapted to tropical conditions. Thus between 1951 and 1956, it has given them nearly 2,000 tons of selected or improved seeds, more than 5 million saplings and cuttings, about 40 tons of tubers, and close to 3,000 head of cattle of a better breed for reproductive purposes.

To list all the results obtained by INEAC would make for tedious reading. However, the remarkable increase in the yield of the crops should not be passed over in silence, for such an increase is the major criterion of the efficiency of an institute for agronomic research. Here are some eloquent figures in this domain.

In 1934, at the time when the Institute embarked upon its program, the average productivity of the Robusta coffee shrub was 478 kilograms (1) to the acre ; today, if conditions in regard to soil and climate are favorable, the productive potential of the seeds supplied by INEAC is 1,400 kilograms.

Since 1930, the yield of rice has risen from 600 to 1,100 kilograms per acre, that of corn from 1,000 to 2,000 kilograms, and that of cotton from 200 to 500 kilograms as far as the variety called « Stoneville » is concerned ; finally, the yield of industrial plantations for the selected palm tree has increased from 1,000 to 2,500 kilograms of oil per acre.

It can be considered that these proportions are not limited to the plants named, but that they can be found in all the industrial and food crop plantations of the Congo. It is therefore obvious that scientific research plays a preponderant part in the prevailing prosperity of the Congo.

(1) 1 kilogram = 2.2046 lbs.

## Results of Agricultural Propaganda.

Here too, the figures show in a striking fashion what progress has been achieved.

From 1950 to 1955, the national income from European agriculture in the Congo has increased by 39 %, rising from over 2 billion to some 3 billion francs. As for the national income from native agriculture, it has increased by 50 %, rising during the same period from about 8 billion to more than 12 billion francs.

The government's action makes use of numerous means. Certain bureaus check the quality and the standardization of products intended for export, such as coffee. Training-farms give technical training on the spot to future European colonists. Specialized services have been set up in certain regions, such as the rural economy syndicate of the Lower Congo and the anti-erosion mission of Bukavu. Bureaus for technical study give help to private individuals, native communities, etc. Moreover, effecting a junction between the research installations of INEAC and various groups of farmers, the government has set up a network of regional stations such as stations for studying problems of adaptation, and local testing centers. Finally, a number of agronomists, accompanied by native assistants, carry on, throughout the country, an intensive action which aims to educate the population and develop different crops.

Between 1950 and 1956, twenty new agricultural schools were opened ; at Leopoldville and Elisabethville two university faculties were created that give the diploma of agricultural engineer.

During the same period, one million acres of land had been prospected with a view to establishing new native farming developments ; 250,000 acres had been protected against erosion, and 10,000 irrigated ; 25,000 acres of forest land had been added ; about twenty local stations for studying problems of adaptation had been built ; finally, more than 125,000 acres of coffee shrubs, palm trees, and Para rubber trees had been planted.

As for the establishment of new native farming developments, the figures gathered in 1956 were decisive. That year nearly 200,000 farms had been parcelled out and more than 150,000 peasants had been settled. These first farmers did not total even one-tenth of the rural population. However, they were producing 15 % of the total output of corn and peanut plants, 22 % of the output of rice (paddy), and 27 % of the output of cotton.

These favorable results are the fruits of close collaboration, according to a system peculiar to the Belgian Congo, between a specialized research service and a government agricultural propaganda service.

## 2.

### Agricultural Activities.

#### A.

#### Crops.

In the Congo, there are two economies — the native and the European — that are often linked, although each retains its own character. They unite their efforts to produce the agricultural raw materials of the country. The European economy frequently supplies the native economy with the impetus and the outlets needed. Today it can be said that almost the entire European agricultural economy is directed toward commercial and industrial outlets, whereas the native agricultural economy, formerly geared to providing a mere means of subsistence, is



freeing itself more and more from its traditional closed cycle and is participating also in the modern trends ; one-fifth of its production is already earmarked for commerce.

The following is a brief survey of the present state of the leading Congolese crops. It should be noted that four large groups of products taken together represent more than eight-tenths of the value of the agricultural exports. These are the products of the *elaeis* palm tree, cotton, coffee, and rubber.

### The *Elaeis* Palm Tree.

The *elaeis* palm tree plays a leading part in Congolese life. It not only supplies the greater part of the population with most of the edible fats needed, but its products head the list of the agricultural output.

The equatorial basin is a natural source of palm oil. It is covered with vast palm groves that were the first sources of raw materials. Gradually, these palm groves are being put to a better use in order to improve their yield ; and finally, huge plantations of selected palm trees giving a higher percentage of oil have come into existence. Since the end of the war, the development of the native and European plantations has proceeded at about the same rate, the former increasing by 100,000 acres in ten years, and the latter by 87,000. Therefore, aside from the natural or improved palm groves, the Congo now has over 500,000 acres of palm plantations, three-quarters of which are in full production; more than one-third of these plantations, which are intended for commercial purposes, are in the hands of the natives.

Two facts will illustrate the economic importance of the palm tree products. The Congo alone furnishes one-sixth of the world's output of palm oil, and one-third of its output of palm nuts.

### Cotton.

The cultivation of cotton is mainly a native activity. It is carried on by more than 700,000 planters who exploit 825,000 acres during an average year.

The geographical situation of the Congo constitutes an economic advantage of the first importance in this connection : Since the cotton zones are located on either side of the equator, the resulting inversion of the harvesting seasons assures continuity of production.

The cotton produced is intended both for export — in which it is second only to the products of the *elaeis* palm tree — and for the home market where textile factories fill a part of the local needs ; these factories absorb one-fifth of the Congolese output of cotton. In Belgium, one out of every six tons of cotton imported comes from the Congo.

The raw cotton harvested by the natives is delivered by them to ginning factories for industrial processing. At this point, a special system has been devised to protect the interests of the native planters : these ginning factories — 125 in number — have been reduced to the rôle of sub-contractors working for the planters. The latter turn their cotton over to the factories for ginning, transportation, and selling on the world markets. According to this system, the cotton remains the property of the native planter until it is sold on the foreign market.

At the same time, the government puts into practice a policy of price stabilization so as to avert the discouraging effect that a sudden collapse of international market prices would have on the native planters. With this aim in view, a «cotton reserve fund» has been set up, to which is contributed a share of the profits realized during good years ; in case of a fall in prices, money is taken out of this fund to assure the native planter of a certain minimum price for his cotton. This system is supplemented by the existence of native co-operatives which serve as intermediaries between individual planters and the organizations that take care of the processing and sale of the cotton.

In June 1955, the assets of the Cotton Fund exceeded 1,300,000,000 francs. It should be noted that the rôle of the Fund is not limited to stabilizing prices ; it also serves the purpose of promoting the economic and social development of the native districts and, in this connection, it has been possible to use some of the reserves for investments intended to improve production.

## Coffee.

Two kinds of coffee shrubs are cultivated in the Congo ; one is indigenous to the country and is called the Robusta, while the other, which is indigenous to Arabia, is known as the Arabica. The Robusta can be cultivated at an altitude as great as 5,000 feet ; the Arabica, at an altitude of 3,300 to 8,300 feet.

The Robusta is grown by the natives and by European enterprises in the North as well as in the equatorial basin ; the Arabica, raised mainly by the Europeans, is found in the east, especially in Kivu and Ituri.

Two agencies — each specialized in one of these species — take care of conditioning them for export, checking the quality, and classifying them according to type.

Congolese coffee, thanks to the strict control of its quality, has quickly found foreign outlets and today is classified among the leading exports. All the different brands are now in demand in most of the coffee-consuming countries of the world and, in the New York market, brands of Arabica are quoted at the highest rates.

The cultivation of Congolese coffee is now in full swing among the European planters as well as in the native communities to which it has brought handsome profits. In 1956, almost 40,000 tons of Congolese coffee had been exported ; the plantations covered some 375,000 acres, including 150,000 acres of young plantations. It can be calculated that, considering the uninterrupted growth in the areas devoted to coffee, in 1965 there will be nearly 250,000 acres in full productivity, which will assure a minimum output of nearly 60,000 tons.

## Rubber.

The Para rubber tree, imported from Brazil, is the best of rubber-producing trees and has found its ideal soil in the vicinity of the equator line. Thanks to systematic cultivation, it has rapidly displaced the lianas and rubber plants that had been grown at the time of the Congo Free State.

Today the Para rubber tree is cultivated by natives as well as by Europeans. The outlets opened up by the last war have brought about a considerable growth in these plantations. Thus, to mention merely the European enterprises, between 1940 and 1956 the acreage increased from some 33,000 to nearly 150,000, of which three-quarters were productive. As for the output, between 1945 and 1956, it soared from about 2,000 tons to more than 30,000. The native plantations have also undergone a considerable development ; at the present time they cover about 50,000 acres. They are generally exploited through native co-operatives, or in collaboration with colonists of the region.

## Cocoa.

Because of its susceptibility to cryptogamic diseases, the cultivation of the cacao tree has proved to be very difficult in the Congo. The tree requires a great deal of care and this explains why almost only Europeans have grown it in the Congo. Moreover, it needs a rich soil and a great deal of rainfall ; the large cacao plantations are found chiefly in the Mayumbe and in an equatorial zone stretching from Lukolela to Stanleyville.

Although the production of Congolese cacao is increasing, its upward trend is moderate. The areas planted expanded between 1947 and 1956 from some 20,000 to nearly 58,000 acres of which 38,000 were productive.



## Tea.

Tea growing is very recent in the Congo. Tea trees, indigenous to Java and India, have little by little spread over large areas of Kivu and Ituri ; plantations which in 1937 covered only 130 acres now occupy more than 5,000.

Congolese tea immediately found outlets in the home markets. The natives soon took to it, and they bought little packages of it by the million. But since 1953 tea production has also found foreign outlets, and its quality has gained a place for it in the London market. Tea growing seems destined to develop considerably, and it is estimated that within ten years the Congo will be able to produce 10,000 tons of tea regularly.

## Food Crops.

Food crops are intended chiefly for the use of the natives. A large part of these crops fills the subsistence needs of the natives, while the rest goes into the market to provision the important centers — the cities and the workers' agglomerations. These crops are produced not only by the natives but also by some of the European colonists living near the larger centers. A small percentage of the output of food crops is earmarked for the foreign market ; in the case of certain products such as rice and fresh cassava, exportation is not permitted unless the needs of the natives have been met.

The chief food crops are fresh cassava, corn, rice, and peanuts. They have an important place in the Congolese economy. Indeed, these four items alone cover an area of nearly 3,750,000 acres ; they yield more than 8 million tons. A quarter of these products are marketed ; it is calculated that the remaining 6 million tons, intended for the needs of the natives, can be evaluated at more than 4 ½ billion francs.

## Other Products.

Other agricultural products, although not negligible, play a less important rôle in the general economy of the country. Among these, cinchona, pyrethrum, tobacco, derris, and plants producing essential oils for perfume are worthy of mention ; they were introduced into the Congo fairly recently and are for the most part cultivated by European colonists.

The Mayumbe region specializes in growing bananas ; the output is already sufficient to meet one-quarter of the Belgian demand. In the Lower Congo, the sugar cane plantations are rapidly expanding, thanks to the increase in home consumption. If sugar exports — which exceeded 12,000 tons in 1939 — have completely ceased since 1950, home consumption on the other hand increased from 18,000 to 28,000 tons during a period of three years, from 1953 to 1956.

The urena fiber plant is grown in some parts of the province of Leopoldville. This activity is entirely in the hands of natives, but its progress is hampered by the difficulties encountered in merchandizing the processing operations.

Among products that are gathered by the natives and that still constitute a source of profit, the punga fiber plant should be mentioned ; but especially noteworthy is copal, a fossilized vegetable resin which occurs in the marshes of certain equatorial regions ; it was of great importance during the war.

## B. Forestry.

The sum total of Congolese forest land, including the wooded savannas, covers some 450,000 square miles, over 50 % of the area of the country. However, less than 5 % of this forest land is

exploitable, and the acreage utilized at present is inferior to 500,000, or .15 % of the total amount.

This very low percentage is due first of all to the great distances separating the exploitable regions from the consumption centers and the chief transportation facilities. Besides, the average productivity of the Congo's forest land is very low. This is accounted for by its heterogeneous composition — as many as forty to eighty different species per acre can be found — and by the fact that the varieties worth exploiting are scattered far and wide. It is estimated that an acre of forest land will yield from 6 to 14 cubic meters of usable logs, or 10 cubic meters on the average. Moreover, the virulence of the wood-destroying agents is a factor not to be overlooked. Expenses involved in production and transportation therefore being high, Congolese wood is costly, and only a few varieties of great economic value are exploited.

The wood exported represents 20 % of the tonnage and 4 to 5 % of the value of the exports of agricultural products. The greater part of the trees felled are intended for local consumption : construction work, furniture, and fuel for industry.

The policy pursued in regard to the Congo's forests is aimed at valorizing the ligneous capital and assuring its conservation ; the latter is indispensable if the country is to be protected against the danger of erosion. With this aim in view, a vast program is under way, a program providing for better care of the forests, an increase in the number of valuable trees, and also reforestation. By the end of 1955, it was estimated that 65,000 acres of forest land had been cared for or made more valuable, 87,000 had been wooded with a view to production, and 400,000 acres of savannas had been protected by planting thick borders around them. A detailed set of rules — as has been shown in the chapter entitled « The Land Policy » — (1) spells out the

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(1) See Part III, Chapter V.

government's forest conservation policy ; it is supplemented by fiscal regulations providing a reforestation tax which must be paid by people engaged in forest exploitation.

## C.

### Fishing and Pisciculture.

Fishing, as well as hunting, was at one time among the chief sources of sustenance for the Congolese. Fish then occupied — as it does today — an important place in the food supply. This can be easily understood when one realizes the immensity of the hydrographic basin of the Congo River together with its numerous ramifications.

However, in this enormous hydrographic basin there existed, side by side with reaches that abounded in fish, others where it was rare. Moreover, the traditional manner of fishing was often disastrous, because it was generally practiced without any system, and even involved the use of toxic substances.

First of all, the « fish-capital » of the reaches abounding in fish had to be protected. In order to do this, a series of measures were taken that were intended to assure rational exploitation by appropriate fishing methods. Then, with the aim of utilizing the reaches less well provided with fish, a system of pisciculture was introduced permitting the breeding of an indigenous fish that would be particularly adaptable to various environments — the tilapia.

This system has borne fruit. One simple fact will serve to illustrate : in 1956, rational methods applied to fishing in



reaches where fish is abundant made it possible to market 100,000 tons of fresh water fish ; to this quantity must of course be added the amount consumed locally by the fishermen and the riverside dwellers. It is interesting to estimate the importance of these 100,000 tons of fish in the life of the country by a comparison with cattle. Out of 100,000 tons of fish 70,000 are consumable. To market 70,000 tons of meat, it would be necessary to slaughter at least 300,000 head of cattle, which would presuppose the normal exploitation of a total of 2,500,000 head in pasture lands. Such a comparison gives an idea of the real value of the « fish-capital » that the Congolese dispose of.

But the work undertaken does not stop here. A considerable effort has also been made in favor of the people who do not live beside reaches of the river abundant in fish, and who therefore have no easy or direct access to these resources. For their benefit, a piscicultural organization was set up in 1948 ; made up at first of research stations created at Elisabethville and Yangambi, it has since developed into a network of fish hatcheries and of experiment ponds distributed throughout the provinces. The organization has also made it possible to create a total of more than 100,000 individual ponds in the rural areas. Here too, the fish used has been the tilapia ; it is a prolific fish that subsists readily on household waste, banana leaves, fresh cassava, etc.

The yield of these individual ponds is still rather uneven, but provided the native takes the trouble to feed the fish regularly — if only with household waste — he can obtain without difficulty from 400 to 600 kilograms per acre each year ; when pisciculture is practiced systematically, the yearly yield may amount to as much as four tons.

What does this represent in the food supply of the Congolese ?

It means that the peasant who has made the effort to set up a simple pond measuring 33 feet by 66 will be able to obtain from it each year, without too much trouble, the same amount of food he would get by slaughtering a head of cattle.

Such a result shows the tremendous importance of pisciculture in provisioning the Congolese populations ; it will soon largely make up for the difficulties presented up to now by supplying them with meat.

Furthermore, mention should be made of the establishment, at Matadi, of a salt water fishing venture which furnishes the markets of Leopoldville and the Lower Congo with more than 3,000 tons of salt water fish every year, and at a price decidedly lower than that charged for fresh water fish transported at great expense to these large agglomerations.

Finally, specialized instruction in the art of fishing has been undertaken. At Kilwa, on Lake Moëro, there is a professional fishing school that trains professional fishermen, boat builders and mechanics, and monitors who will spread a knowledge of rational fishing methods among the population. The success this school has met with gave rise to the founding of a similar establishment on Lake Tanganika, which also offers great resources.

## D.

### Cattle Breeding.

When the Belgians arrived in the Congo cattle-breeding was non-existent, except in some small areas of the Northeast where tribes of immigrated shepherds had settled down. In the rest of the country, to be sure, the villagers kept small livestock, but there was no breeding in the technical sense of the term. It was above all through hunting and fishing that the natives found food to supplement their vegetable and fruit diet ; but even these resources were problematical and generally irregular. Here, as in crop raising, the deficiency in the amount of food produced caused chronic malnutrition.

Cattle had to be introduced into the country — especially bovines — in order to combat malnutrition and also assure provisioning of the cities and the industrial agglomerations. But

cattle-breeding in the Congo raised complex problems; local breeds had to be selected, foreign breeds introduced and acclimatized, and then the two had to be crossed. The mediocre quality of the pasture lands and the existence of tropical diseases that were often fatal created other difficulties.

With a view to favoring the introduction and propagation of the larger types of cattle, especially in the territories where breeding was as yet unknown, and also in order to acquaint the rural populations with rational methods, the Ten Year Plan has provided for a vast zootechnical program which is now being carried out. It calls for four training centers for nurses and assistant veterinarians, the construction of two large laboratories producing serums and vaccines, and, finally, the establishment of about twenty stations concerning themselves with the problems of adaptation and reproduction of bovine animals; the latter already number more than 10,000 head of breeding stock.

For its part, in a group of five experiment stations, INEAC carries on the selection of native cattle and the introduction of improved breeds adapted to local conditions; it has also set up centers where the improvement of natural pastures is studied.

In spite of the immense difficulties that had to be overcome, the herds of bovines built up in the Congo total over a million head today, more than half of them being the property of the natives. Without counting the denizens of the poultry yard, the smaller livestock exceed 2,700,000 in number.

At the present time the leading European-owned breeding stations are found in the Lower Congo, in Kivu, and on the high plateaus of Katanga, Kasai, and Ituri. The native-owned stations are often located in the Northeast; in these are raised the traditional livestock of pastoral populations.

The expansion of cattle-breeding has enabled the country to grow less dependent on foreign imports for its meat supply.

Already in 1956 meat imports amounted to only 10,000 tons, less than one-third of the total amount required, whereas the local slaughter houses accounted for as much as 25,000 tons, merely in bovines and swine.

Most of the cattle is used for this indispensable provisioning of meat for the population; however, dairy products have not been neglected; domestic milk, butter and cheese are delivered regularly for local consumption.

## E. Hunting.

As can be seen, supplying the population of the Congo with meat has for a long time involved great problems. Introducing cattle, organizing cattle-breeding, together with the systematization of fishing methods and the widespread practice of pisciculture, have solved these problems. However, the fact that these resources are greatly increasing is no reason for under-estimating the importance of game.

Doubtless game is insufficient to feed the population; however, in certain regions where cattle-breeding and pisciculture have not yet been introduced, game remains the principal source of protein food.

It has recently been estimated that hunting supplies the Congolese population with 40,000 tons of fresh meat every year. To obtain one ton of fresh meat, four or five head of cattle must be slaughtered. To procure the equivalent of the 40,000 tons obtained by hunting, it would be necessary to slaughter 170,000 head of cattle, an operation which would presuppose the existence of 1,300,000 head grazing, at the very least.



Even from a purely economic point of view, Congolese game is worth while : hunting licenses, taxes for killing certain animals, sale of zoological specimens, exportation of ivory — all these are sources of revenue not to be disregarded. But it is obvious that, together with the desire to protect wild animals, the conservation of the « fauna-capital » intended to serve as sustenance for future populations has guided the government's policy in this question.

On the one hand, with the aim of fostering continuous scientific research on the fauna and flora, and of conserving certain natural wealth, strictly controlled reservations have been established. They are managed by the Institut des Parcs Nationaux du Congo Belge (Institute of National Parks of the Belgian Congo). The Parc National Albert (King Albert National Park) in Kivu is the oldest ; only some parts of it are open to tourists. The other parks are located in the Northeast of the country and in Katanga ; these are the parks of Garamba and Upemba. The aggregate area of the three amounts to some 6,250,000 acres. In addition to the strictly controlled game preserves, there are some adjacent grounds where rules are less strict.

At the same time, throughout the country, a body of legal measures protects the Congolese fauna and subjects it to control. Hunting is rather strictly regulated ; for this purpose, the government has at its disposal a special service working in collaboration with a body of game wardens. The hunting regulations serve to protect the fauna from unchecked destruction which would lead to its extinction, and also to organize hunting expeditions against certain dangerous wild animals such as elephants which attack plantations, or lions and leopards which often menace both human beings and cattle.

In order to combat the depletion of herds, certain zones are subject to special regulations. They may be classified as strictly or partially controlled « reservations » : in the former, all the animals are protected ; in the latter, only certain species. Furthermore, some zones can be converted into « hunting estates » where hunting is subject to the payment of special taxes and governed by certain conditions.

At the present time, the government's policy leans toward the establishment of hunting grounds reserved exclusively for the natives. This policy has already been put in operation by the creation of the hunting preserves of Bakumu, Mondo, and Azande, in the Northeast.

### 3.

## Main Features of Congolese Agriculture.

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In the Congo there are nearly 1,800,000 families of native farmers. More than 150,000 of them abandoned their ancestral tradition of agricultural nomadism some years ago, and settled down in native farming developments, where they cultivate the same land in a rational manner.

Alongside this native agriculture, cattle raising and also commercial and industrial plantations in the hands of European companies and colonists have been built up on a vast scale. All this progress has stimulated analogous activities in African circles.

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Today, European agriculture in the Congo, making use of a labor force of 300,000 natives, exploits directly over 1,500 square miles of plantations and some 450 square miles of forests and pasture lands ; 400,000 head of cattle graze on the latter.

The large companies cultivate especially the Para rubber tree, the coffee shrub, the cacao tree, and the elaeis palm tree. In addition, there are some 1,800 colonists engaged in agriculture who have settled down principally in Kivu, Katanga, and Ituri ; they go in chiefly for cattle-breeding and specialized cultures.

As for native agriculture, it is unquestionably undergoing a transformation. Doubtless the natives still grow a large part of their yearly crops according to their traditional methods ; but these methods have been improved, and crop rotation is now being practiced in a rational way. Not only do the quantity and the variety of the products harvested now fill the needs of the population, but commercial crops, such as the palm tree products, cotton, rubber, and coffee, have added greatly to the income of the native farmers ; the latter, encouraged by a government policy of price supports, have gone forward resolutely on the path of commercial activity and have now taken their place beside the European enterprises in the Congo.

Thus native agriculture, intended at first to provide more subsistence, is gradually entering the commercial sphere.

But another and equally important fact is the movement — initiated within the last few years — to stabilize the status of the native farmers through the creation of the native farming developments. By keeping the rural populations on the land, these



farming developments are bringing about another transformation in Congolese agriculture : the replacement of the old extensive methods of crop growing by intensive and modern ones, a change that results in greater productivity.

Moreover, the increase in the productivity of the rural areas is being integrated into a vast program which will be the object of the second Ten Year Plan, and which will contribute to the development of domestic trade. Indeed, a veritable revolution in Congolese agriculture is taking place right now : the transformation, under the influence of European techniques, of semi-nomad tribes into a peasant class whose social and economic rôle is proving to be important.

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Such are, considered separately, the various factors in Congolese agriculture. Can a general conclusion be drawn from them ?

It is certain that, thanks to thorough scientific research and persistent work, it has become one of the major elements in the country's prosperity : rich, diversified, filling a large part of the domestic needs and occupying a place in world markets, it seems to be in full swing. However, its main features as described here are far from being definitive : a general view presents the appearance of a geological cross section showing strata that are in the process of transformation, strata which, although once strictly parallel, now tend more and more to interpenetrate. The future aspect of Congolese agriculture will depend in large part on the modernization and stabilization, already begun, of its native element. If the effort undertaken succeeds, it will produce a vigorous peasant class organized in co-operatives. A perfectly natural result will be symbiosis with European agriculture in the Congo, which had begun by constituting the prop and stimulus of the native element.

## CHAPTER IV

# BASIC INDUSTRIES

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## 1. The Congo's Exceptional Mineral Wealth.

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In the economic history of the Congo, the basic industries — mining and metallurgy — have held the first place.

They are responsible for the introduction of the industrial revolution and of commerce into the heart of Africa. They have furnished the government with a large part of the material means required for the organization of the country, the creation of its substructure, and the progress of the local populations.

They have given the Congo the prominent place it occupies in the world's economy. The Colony ranks first for its output of cobalt and industrial diamonds, fourth for copper and tin and sixth for zinc (1) ; the Congo is among the leading producers of uranium, and besides possesses large quantities of rare metals such as tantalum, wolfram, and manganese.

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(1) Not including the U.S.S.R.



These basic industries, which constitute the most important and most dynamic element in Congolese economy, are far from having reached their final stage of development. Research and prospecting now going on make it possible to foresee new achievements and the utilization, in the not too distant future, of wealth that, for technical reasons, has remained unexploited until now.

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How can one explain the fact that within the lapse of half a century, a country with a poor and scattered population has built up so many prosperous industrial centers buzzing with extraordinary vitality? And how has this land — still unknown not very long ago — been transformed into one of the leading suppliers of non-ferrous metals in the world?

Such a transformation could have happened only with the help of exceptionally favorable circumstances.

The first of these circumstances was the amazing wealth and variety of exploitable deposits of ore. This wealth was so extraordinary that, in regard to Katanga, the term « geological scandal » was used. As long ago as 1892, the young Belgian geologist Jules Cornet, a member of the Bia-Francqui Expedition, was the first to point out the importance of these deposits and to map out the general geological pattern of the country. Twenty years later diamonds as well as gold and tin ores, were being mined in the various provinces of the Congo, and the first ingots of copper were cast at Elisabethville.

Where are these immense deposits to be found?

Almost all of them are concentrated in old rock formations, often metamorphic and generally characterized by folds, which surround the great Congolese basin. The ores they yield are usually complex, and only in the course of treatment is it possible to dissociate the various metals they contain.

The distribution of these deposits among six main regions can be outlined as follows:

\* The most important region is southern Katanga; here are found surface rock formations, characterized by folds, which are rich in copper, zinc, cobalt, lead, iron, silver, gold, cadmium, germanium, nickel, and uranium.

\* Farther away, toward the north, the « tin zone » stretches over an expanse of more than 600 miles as far as Maniema and Kivu; it produces tin, tantalum, niobium, tungsten, beryllium, bismuth, gold, and rare earths.

\* Beyond these regions, very ancient rock formations containing gold cover the northeastern part of the country.

\* At the other extremity of the Congo, there is a strip along the Atlantic coast where bituminous sand is exploited; besides, some traces of oil have been discovered there.

\* Past this strip lie the rock formations characterized by folds of the Lower Congo, which contain copper, zinc, lead, vanadium, and gold.

\* Finally, to the south of the central basin of the Congo, from the Kwango to the Lubilashi rivers, the diamond-producing region is found. At its extreme southeast corner, adjoining Katanga, there are deposits of manganese not far from Dilolo. (1)

In the large central basin which occupies a quarter of the Congo, prospecting has recently been done, but as of today, no positive results have been achieved in regard to the possible exploitation of minerals or liquid fuels.

However, located as it was in a sparsely populated country with an unhealthy climate, and furthermore, removed from the

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(1) There are also coal deposits and salt mines in Katanga, lime and stone quarries in various regions, and bituminous shale — under study at the present time — in the Eastern Province.

great commercial highways, this exceptional mineral wealth required for its exploitation a human factor which also had to be exceptional. Not only were strong will and dogged tenacity needed to vanquish the initial difficulties, but also technical know-how that would assure efficient exploitation, as well as sufficient confidence to attract the necessary amount of capital to what, half a century ago, was still an adventure; and finally, arduous toil in which all, Europeans and Africans, would participate. Without these unrivaled qualities, the human factor would not have been able to raise the country to that high degree of prosperity and social progress it has reached today. In short, the mining adventure of the Belgian Congo has been above all a human adventure.

The mining adventure of the Congo was fostered and stimulated by still another favorable circumstance, this one external to the country: the increase in the world's consumption of metal. In fifty years, it doubled, and in some cases trebled and even quadrupled. At the same time, metals that not long before had been little known made their appearance on the markets. This greater need for metals was a strong incentive which spurred new enterprise.

The combination of these favorable circumstances — the existence of exceptional resources in the way of raw materials, the contribution of a human effort of great value, and the increased world consumption — has made possible the Congo's technical revolution, its social progress, and its complete transformation.

## 2.

### Leading Products.

#### A.

#### Copper and Allied Metals.

Copper and allied metals rank first in Congolese industry. They hold this place because of the capital invested and the large labor force employed, and also because of the value and volume of the output.

There are copper deposits in the Lower Congo, but these are still in the prospecting and testing stage. The deposits exploited have been concentrated, until now, in Upper Katanga; their importance has brought about the creation of one of the greatest African industrial plants.

The « Union Minière du Haut-Katanga » (Mining Union of Upper Katanga), which ranks among the hundred most important industrial concerns in the world, assumes the entire



responsibility for the exploitation of all these deposits. It has received a concession of 7,700 square miles which will end in 1990.

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The ores extracted have a copper content appreciably higher than can be found in any other mine in the world.

These ores appear in two different forms : a sulphide form to be found in the subsoil, and an oxide form found on the surface. The latter can be exploited in open-pit mines.

In the oxide ores, cobalt occurs associated with copper, and in the sulphide ores, zinc, lead, cadmium, and germanium are found ; during the refining process, small quantities of gold, silver, platinum, and palladium are recovered.

### Sulphide Ores.

Sulphide ores come from the Kipushi mine called « Mine Prince Léopold », located to the west of Elisabethville. The deposit consists of a rich vein that is almost vertical ; it is exploited by means of a subterranean tunnel and three shafts that go down to a depth of some 1,600 feet. It is the only underground copper mine in Katanga.

On the spot, the ore extracted undergoes first a differential concentration by means of the classical process known as « flotation » ; this process makes it possible to obtain, on the one hand, a copper concentrate poor in zinc, and on the other hand, a zinc concentrate poor in copper.

The copper concentrate is treated by a heating process in the Lubumbashi plant near Elisabethville. It is then smelted in waterjacket furnaces that produce mattes containing 62 to 64 % of copper ; these mattes are then processed in converters from

which emerges blister copper, which has a 99 % copper content. This blister copper is sent to Belgium where it undergoes an electrolytic refining treatment that makes it possible to recover silver ore.

As for the zinc concentrate, part of it — after being roasted — is sent to Belgium where it is delivered to zinc factories ; another part is treated on the spot by enterprises belonging to the same group as the Union Minière. The zinc treated on the spot gives electrolytic zinc that is more than 99.99 % pure. The sulphurous gases produced by the treatment of zinc are converted into sulphuric acid.

The cadmium and germanium ores are recovered in the dust found in the furnaces of Lubumbashi and in the refuse thrown off during the process of electrolyzing zinc. They are treated on the spot or in Belgium.

### Oxide Ores.

Oxide ores, notably malachite, are extracted chiefly in the regions of Kolwezi, Ruwe, Musonoi-Kamoto. Their exploitation takes place in open-pit mines ; it is entirely mechanized, thanks to the use of electric shovels and draglines.

After having undergone washing at Ruwe and been treated at the Kolwezi works, which delivers copper and copper-cobalt concentrates, the ores are sent to the metallurgical plant of Jadotville. The latter, by the process of electrolysis, obtains cobalt which is 99 % pure, and copper which is 99.95 % pure. Certain ores and concentrates, rich in cobalt, are smelted in electric furnaces and yield an alloy containing, among other ores, 45 % of cobalt and 15 % of copper ; this alloy is sent to Belgium and the United States where refining takes place.

At the present time, the Congo supplies two-thirds of the cobalt produced in the world. The slag gathered from the electric furnace used in treating cobalt serves as raw material for a metallurgical cement factory at Jadotville.

## Uranium.

At Shinkalobwe, some 15 miles west of Jadotville, there is an underground uranium and radium mine which has placed the Congo, since the war, in the first rank of uranium producers.

The uranium ore is treated on the spot by using a rather complex process, and it is delivered, in the form of concentrates containing radium, to the United States and Great Britain, according to the terms of an agreement concluded between Belgium and those countries; a part of the total output is reserved for the needs of Belgium.

A rather striking phenomenon has occurred in regard to uranium production. For a long time, radium played the principal if not the only part in this production; it was even the cause of the Congo's emergence as an important country. Today radium, whose use has been partly eclipsed by radioactive cobalt and isotopes, has become a mere by-product of uranium which now ranks first. Nevertheless, the Belgian Congo remains the only country in the world producing radium.

## B.

### Tin and Allied Metals.

The high quality of its tins has rapidly strengthened the Congo's position in the world markets, where it now occupies the fourth place.

Tin is extracted from a tin dioxide, cassiterite. The latter is found sometimes in primary mineralized formations, and sometimes in alluvial and eluvial sediments originating in the action of surface waters on primary deposits.

The Congolese cassiterite deposits are part of the stanniferous zone that traverses Uganda and Tanganyika; they cover an area over 600 miles in length and a few hundred in width,

extending from Upper Katanga to the north of Kivu and passing through Maniema. As early as the beginning of the century, tin was being extracted in Katanga, but today Maniema has become the leading tin-producing area.

Tin is exploited by several colonists and by some twenty companies, of which the most important are the Géomines Company at Manono and the Symétain Company in Maniema. Since 1938 this exploitation has been gradually mechanized except in the case of insignificant deposits; this has brought about a considerably greater productivity and a very definite increase in the exploitable reserves. Concerns of moderate size have entrusted the exploitation of their concessions to a common contractor; this enables them to reduce the capital outlay required for mechanization.

How is exploitation carried out today by a concern using mechanized equipment?

First, worthless soil must be removed and the stanniferous gravel extracted; these operations are performed sometimes by means of gigantic mechanical shovels or by draglines, sometimes by powerful jets of water under pressure that wash away the soil.

The extracted ore is first sent to be washed, a treatment which releases the cassiterite; the latter is then subjected to a process of concentration that produces a kind of « marketable » cassiterite having a tin content that ranges from 72 to 76 %.

At Manono the Géomines Company has begun the treatment of hard pegmatites; in order to do this, a plant has been set up equipped with grinders and very powerful mills, as well as special machinery for recovering by-products.

Before being marketed, the Congolese output of cassiterite is sent to Belgium, where it is processed in foundries or exported, especially to the United States. However, the cassiterite produced by the Géomines Company is treated in the Congo, since this Company has its own electric tin foundry, which makes it possible to put ingots on sale directly.



The world tin market is controlled by an international agreement to which the Belgian Congo has adhered. The object of this agreement is to regularize the market and to maintain a balance between production and consumption.

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Certain minerals are often found associated with cassiterite : wolframite, which is the source of tungsten, and tantalocolumbite, which yields tantalum and niobium. These rare metals are being used more and more in the manufacture of special varieties of steel, high precision instruments, electric and electronic matériel.

In the Congo, wolframite and tantalocolumbite are separated from cassiterite after concentration, by means of electromagnetic apparatus, and are exported in the form of concentrates.

Recently the Géomines Company has been studying the extraction and treatment of spodumene, a lithium ore ; the company's deposits of pegmatite have a spodumene content of 15 %.

## C. Gold.

The auriferous ores of the Congo are found chiefly in the Eastern Province and in Kivu. In Kivu the gold mineralization area partly covers that of tin ; consequently, the two minerals are exploited by the same companies. Elsewhere the output is very slight. Gold is also produced in Kasai as well as in Upper Katanga, where copper metallurgy makes it possible to recover several dozen pounds of gold as a by-product.

Two companies head the Congolese gold market and aggregate four-fifths of the total output. They are the Société

des Mines d'Or de Kilo-Moto (Kilo-Moto Gold Mine Company) in Ituri, and the Compagnie Minière des Grands Lacs Africains (Great African Lakes Mining Company) in Kivu.

Gold is found in the Congo, sometimes in primary rocks where it exists in veins, and sometimes in alluvial and eluvial deposits where it occurs in powder, grains, or nuggets.

For a long time river beds and eluvial deposits were practically the only gold sources to be exploited. Gradually the different operations involved in the exploitation of these sources of gold have become mechanized : dredging, excavating, stoping, and even washing, which is often done in mobile units.

But recently extraction of primary deposits of gold has improved considerably, especially in Ituri. It is done in both open-pit and underground mines, and it already furnishes nearly half the Congolese output. The operations involved are complex: the ore in the vein is broken down, crushed, and then ground fine in order to release the gold scattered in the hard rock.

The gold obtained from various sources is smelted, sometimes on the spot and sometimes in Belgium where it is refined by electrolysis. Then, cast into ingots, it is bought in principle by the Banque Centrale du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi (Central Bank of the Belgian Congo and of Ruanda-Urundi) ; however, the producers are authorized to sell freely a part of their gold for industrial, medical, or artistic purposes.

It should be noted that the Bretton Woods Agreements, which were signed by the Congo, constitute a handicap for gold-exploiting enterprises, and render valueless many deposits which have a low gold content. Indeed, as a result of these agreements, the selling price of gold has not varied since 1944, in spite of the constant increase in exploitation expenses.

## D. Diamonds.

With 13 million carats a year, the Congo supplies 90 % of the industrial diamonds sold all over the world.

The production of diamonds is concentrated almost exclusively in the province of Kasai. Five companies have concessions there, but exploitation is assured by the Société Internationale Forestière et Minière du Congo (International Forest and Mining Company of the Congo), which acts both on its own account and as a contractor for other concessionaires.

The deposits of Kasai are localized in two clearly delimited zones: that of Tshikapa, on the Kasai River, and that of Bakwanga, on the Bushimaie.

In the region of Tshikapa, gravel from valleys and terraces is treated; only 25 to 35 % of the diamonds found there can be used in jewelry. The region of Bakwanga furnishes industrial diamonds almost exclusively, the proportion of precious stones not exceeding 2 or 3 %; its output is twenty times as great as that of Tshikapa.

All phases of extraction and processing connected with diamonds are highly mechanized. On the very spot where the extraction takes place, stoping and sluicing operations are completed, followed by washing in stationary or mobile units, after which a first concentrate is obtained and sent to Tshikapa and Bakwanga to be sorted. There the product is concentrated anew and freed from its magnetic elements. Finally, this second concentrate undergoes a last treatment. At Tshikapa, it is carried along by a stream of water on vibrating tables coated with a special kind of grease which has the property of retaining diamonds. At Bakwanga, it is placed in a separator containing a dense liquid; the diamonds fall to the bottom, while less heavy elements float on the surface. In both cases the diamonds are removed by hand.

Today, almost the entire uncut diamond trade of the world is handled by the Diamond Trading Company and the Industrial Distributors Ltd. of London; the rôle of these organizations, in which Congolese producers have shares, is to regulate prices and establish an equilibrium between the supply and the market's capacity for absorption.

## E. Manganese.

Important manganese deposits are found in the southwest of Katanga, notably at Kisenge and Kasekelesa, not far from the Tenke-Dilolo railroad.

The ore is in the form of manganese oxide and after extraction, washing, and sluicing, it yields a marketable product containing 50 to 52 % of manganese.

The Congolese output of manganese amounts to about 500,000 tons and all of it is exported, notably to the great ironworks of Europe and America.

The manufacture of ferro-manganese compounds is now under study.

## F. Other Products.

The range of ores that exist in the Congolese subsoil is practically unlimited.

In addition to copper, tin and their allied metals, to gold, diamonds and manganese, the Congo's subsoil also yields coal, lead, vanadium, bituminous limestone, beryl, salt, iron, etc.



Congolese coal is exploited near Bukama and Albertville, but it is mediocre in quality and can be used only by some local industries which often combine it with imported coal or coke.

In the region of Thysville, deposits of copper, lead, and vanadium are found ; the last two are already being treated on a small scale, while prospecting continues in the region.

In Kivu, the gold and tin-producing region also yields beryl, amblygonite, monazite, and bismuth ; there, too, exploitation is in its infancy.

Near Boma, there are deposits of bituminous sands and limestone — with a bitumen content of 15 % — which furnishes products used for asphaltting roads.

Finally, in Katanga, salt mines are found, but their exploitation has remained rather rudimentary.

One of the great potential sources of wealth in the Congo is iron ore, which the country possesses in abundance. Up to the present time it has been of small proportions and has consisted mainly in the manufacturing of cast iron in limited quantities ; iron ore has also been utilized as a flux in the manufacture of copper and tin. But it seems that, if the exploitation of the iron deposits could be made a paying proposition, it might some day give rise to a great metallurgical industry which, by using rare metals as alloys, would produce on the spot special varieties of highly valuable steel.

### 3.

## **What Belgium's Economic Policy in the Congo has achieved.**

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The progress of the Congo's basic industries can be accounted for by a carefully considered economic policy. This policy has succeeded in bringing about an equilibrium between the general welfare and private enterprise, in stimulating a close collaboration between the latter and the government, and in making the entire community share in the profits of industrialization.

From the start the government reserved for itself rights of control and supervision in regard to basic industries; it has enacted legislative and fiscal measures assuring it of an important part of their profits. At the same time, through a system of direct or indirect participation, it has associated itself with their management and functioning. Thus the government became bound up with their future while at the same time insisting that priority be given to the general welfare. The prosperity attained has made it possible to raise continuously the entire country's standard of living.

This policy of equilibrium and of solicitude for the public welfare presents many complex and varied aspects.

Indeed, it was not enough merely to extract from the mines the products that would bring about an economic structure and a greater degree of comfort for everybody. These products, by their very nature, seemed destined to dwindle and disappear with the exhaustion of the deposits; the first task was therefore to make sure that the deposits would last as long as possible and that they would be exploited in the most rational way.

But beyond this economic objective, the government has envisaged a vast domain of social activities. As protector of the public welfare and guardian of the natives, it has not been satisfied with the exploitation of mining wealth, but has seen to it that the new industrial regions were developed with the greatest efficiency. Indeed, the government saw in the basic industries an important factor of social progress.

However, this social progress depended above all on economic stability. The young Congolese society had to be protected against disturbances — particularly serious for a still underdeveloped country that had not yet come of age — disturbances resulting from changes in world conditions. The government has given its most careful attention to this task of stabilization; it has applied an adequate policy of transportation rates, protection of salaries, fiscal measures and international agreements. Thus, by means of close collaboration between government and industry, an atmosphere of security has been created,

in which fluctuations of world markets have brought about only a minimum of disturbances on the economic, as well as on the social level.

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This policy acquires its full meaning when one considers the first-rate importance that the basic industries have taken on in the life of the country.

The mining output — both in volume and in value — represents today about half of the Congo's exports. The rhythm of its expansion has been particularly rapid: indeed, between 1920 and 1950, its volume increased tenfold, and it has doubled since 1950. Copper and allied metals, coal, and manganese represent more than nine-tenths of this volume which considerably exceeds one million tons. Copper alone accounts for half the value of the output, which fluctuates between 15 and 20 billion francs.

Today, three hundred mines and almost as many quarries are under exploitation. Nearly one hundred factories treat minerals. This entire industrial structure is in the hands of about sixty strongly capitalized enterprises which have invested some 15 billion francs. Their very size calls for great concentrations of capital. They have retained more or less close ties with the financial and industrial groups that set them up. Thanks to mechanization and rationalization, these industries employ a relatively small labor force — barely one-twelfth of the total labor force of the Congo — a little over 120,000 natives and 3,500 Europeans.

The part played by the mining companies has been outstanding in the social evolution of the country. In their dealings with their personnel they have remained constantly in the foreground, paying salaries generally far higher than those prevailing in other branches of the economy, establishing their own systems of social benefits long before the law did so, and organizing — for the welfare of their workers — social assistance, schools of all



kinds, hospitals, dispensaries, maternity hospitals, and sometimes even charitable institutions and day nurseries.

What is more, the large mining companies have completely transformed the aspect of the regions where they have established themselves. This transformation has not been limited to the establishment of huge industrial units, but has extended over the entire country, calling new cities into existence, creating international railroad lines and hydroelectric stations. These companies supplied the factors — transportation, and sources of energy — which were soon to make possible the setting up of manufacturing industries. In this manner, they have favored the development of a home market indispensable to the stability and the progress of the Congo

## CHAPTER V MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

no longer be kept supplied by the native handicrafts, now doomed to disappear; furthermore, the general fitting out of a country where progress was in full swing acted as an important stimulus.

The war of 1940 was to give a new impetus to this expansion. At that time the Congo, suddenly cut off from many of its usual sources of supplies, had to set up new industries in order to fill some of its needs. Since then, manufacturing in the Congo has progressed continuously; it has been sustained as much by fortunate combinations of circumstances as by the constant rise in the population's standard of living, especially that of the native element.

This progress will doubtless go on in the years to come. It will go on not only because of the development of the home market — which is one of the objectives of the second Ten Year Plan — but mainly because of the setting up of the Inga dam which will make available enormous resources of hydroelectric energy and thus make possible, as King Baudouin emphasized, « the establishment of great manufacturing industries in central Africa ».

It is evident that the utilization of the Inga dam — expected to start in 1964 — will bring about profound changes in the present location of the manufacturing industries. At the present time they are concentrated especially in Upper Katanga and the vicinity of Leopoldville, except for the factories processing agricultural products, which are generally located in the agricultural areas. Besides, on the outskirts of some urban agglomerations, there are factories turning out commodities for mass consumption which would entail very heavy transportation expenses. The cheap and exceptionally abundant electric current to be furnished by the Inga installations will certainly give rise to a vast industrial zone in the Lower Congo whose rôle might become as important as that of the industrial setup of Katanga during the last fifty years.

In short, industrialization is in full swing, and its possibilities may prove to be as gigantic as the new source that will supply them with electric power.

## 2.

### A Brief Outline.

#### A.

#### **Processing of Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs.**

##### **Oleaginous Products.**

Industries processing oleaginous products occupy one of the most important places among the manufacturing industries of the Congo.

Gradually modern oil refineries have been replacing old rudimentary methods of fermentation, and today more than 500 refineries equipped with up-to-date machinery turn out over 200,000 tons of palm oil a year.

Peanuts, palm kernels, cotton-seed, and the beans of the castor oil plants are also processed in factories.



Most of the output is exported ; tankers and tank cars furnish transportation of palm oil in bulk from the factories to the ships, where it is loaded by the gravity process. A certain quantity of edible oil and margarine is reserved for local consumption, and palm oil remains one of the traditional ingredients of native cooking.

Furthermore, soap factories have been set up, and at the present time there are about sixty of them, mostly small-scale undertakings. Nevertheless, they turn out a complete range of products from soap in bars and soft soap to detergents and washing powder. In this field, there is room for considerable expansion in order to meet needs that are constantly growing.

## Textiles.

The textile industry is one of the most striking achievements of the Congolese economy : it is one of the first to represent a complete economic circuit. This is a closed circuit ; it remains on the spot from start to finish, going from the planter to the consumer via the factory technician and the local dealer. The textile industry is at the same time a typical example of the Belgian policy in the Congo. The government began by introducing cotton growing, and then favored the construction of factories : first, factories for the processing of cotton, and later, textile factories that would transform the fiber into cloth and various other articles intended for home consumption.

Today four weaving factories supply raw cloth and dyed or printed drill ; one of them even manufactures waterproof material. However, they are up against strong competition on the part of foreign concerns, especially in connection with fashionable and printed fabrics ; with their annual output of some 65,000 yards, they can fill only a small part of the Congo's cotton cloth needs.

On the other hand, the nine underwear and knitted goods factories and the hundred workshops that turn out ready-made clothing can supply the home market fairly well, except for

luxury items and articles that follow the swift changes in European fashions.

Besides, the textile industry furnishes the local market with most of the absorbent cotton, surgical dressings, knitting threads, and one-quarter of the blankets needed.

In addition to cotton, the Congo's textile industry treats sisal, urena, and punga ; specialized factories supply the country every year with rope and also with two-thirds of the bags required and over 3 million yards of burlap.

## Other Agricultural Products.

Coffee, tea, cocoa, and rubber are sorted, processed, and conditioned in 600 specialized factories, chiefly for exportation.

There are also hundreds of rice and flour mills which provision the natives with rice, corn flour, and fresh cassava flour.

In the Lower Congo, a sugar refinery whose output was originally exported in total today supplies the home market exclusively ; another sugar refinery has just been built in the valley of the Ruzizi where the cultivation of sugar cane has been introduced ; this refinery will fill the needs of the eastern part of the Congo and also Ruanda-Urundi.

Three factories treat local and imported tobaccos. Taken together they come close to furnishing the local market with an adequate supply of cigarettes ; the most important of them can produce 11 million cigarettes a day. On the other hand, the manufacture of cigars and cigarillos, after having enjoyed a certain amount of success, is today faced with vigorous competition on the part of foreign producers.

## Dairy Products, Meat, and Fish.

More than 200 dairy farms, generally located near urban agglomerations, provide milk, butter, and cheese for the European population, and lately also for the natives who, under the influence of an educational campaign carried on in the social centers, are beginning to introduce milk into their diet.

Slaughter houses, butcher and pork butcher shops sell the products of the local stock farms. More than 300 establishments prepare smoked meat, and over a thousand supply dried, salted, or smoked fish; these products are intended especially for the natives.

Leather is used extensively; tanneries, some 200 workshops, and small local factories, together with two large factories, now deliver 2 million pairs of shoes a year and fill the greater part of the local needs.

## Wood.

The existence of over a thousand enterprises concerning themselves with forest exploitation, and of no fewer than 1,200 sawmills gives an idea of the importance of the wood industry in the Congo. The operations involved range all the way from the felling of trees to the work of the local cabinetmaker, and include the seasoning of wood in large factories, and the manufacturing of plywood in some newly created establishments which soon found outlets in foreign markets.

More than 300,000 cubic meters of logs were sold in 1956 in local markets: wood for construction purposes and wood for making furniture. To this impressive figure must be added the wood cut for industrial and domestic heating.

Cabinet-making is still in its infancy; industrial plants have been created, but at the same time native workshops, constantly

growing in number, have appeared; they are in the hands of independent owners and are modern and well equipped. This activity will doubtless become thoroughly integrated into the Congolese life of tomorrow.

## B.

### The Construction Industry.

The construction industry is booming in the Congo. In practice, its possibilities are limited only by the extent of the capital invested in it, whether it is a question of providing durable and comfortable lodgings for Europeans and Africans, of setting up industrial or administrative units, of building or improving roads, harbor, and air fields, of creating urban centers, etc.

At the present time, there are more than 600 construction companies, ranging from the large concern that puts up ultra-modern buildings to the small firm that attends to mere routine work. Every year some 2,000 building permits are issued, representing a value of about two billion francs. Merely in the matter of providing lodgings for the natives, the Office des Cités Africaines (Office for African Cities) has set down on its program 40,000 houses to be finished before 1960.

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Most of the materials used for construction are manufactured on the spot.

Hundreds of brickyards and tile factories produce from 300 to 400 million bricks and from 3 to 5 million tiles a year; to this should be added the hollow bricks used in the construction of larger buildings.



Difficulties encountered in securing supplies of cement — which for the most part had to be imported — held back the construction industry for a long time. Today three cement factories, one in the province of Leopoldville and the other two in Katanga, turn out, taken together, more than 1,500 tons of Portland cement every day ; a fourth cement factory, in Jadotville, manufactures a metallurgical cement from the slag delivered by the Union Minière. Other cement factories are either under construction or in the planning stage, especially in Kivu and in the Eastern Province, and their completion will free the Congo from its dependence on imported cement, at least as far as the kinds commonly used are concerned.

The fibro-cement industry has specialized in the manufacture of plates and tiles. Besides, numerous enterprises produce concrete or cement fittings such as pipes, cranks, and traps, as well as ceramics. However, in this field there is strong foreign competition.

A newly created industry, that of cellular concrete, seems to be headed for success.

Numerous limekilns are in operation, especially near the main cities. The lime produced is used not only for construction, but also in the treatment of certain ores, especially copper.

Around these basic branches of the construction industry, various sideline industries — although still few in number — have sprung up, such as plumbing, ceiling work, painting, etc.

### C.

#### Chemical Industry.

Congolese chemical industries are located chiefly in Katanga and in the vicinity of Leopoldville. They supply factories, and provide the local market with consumer goods ; in

addition, they process certain substances with a view to exportation.

At Jadotville, a large industrial plant manufactures sulphuric acid, sodium chlorate, hydrolyzed oil and reagents for hydrolysis, industrial glycerine, ferrous and ferric sulphates, copper sulphate, distilled water, hydrochloric acid, caustic soda, and pyresetrol.

Two factories produce powder and explosives used in mining, while six enterprises furnish paints and varnishes ; others turn out insecticides, and still others, perfumery that is very popular among the natives.

At Bukavu, a specialized plant prepares quinine salts from the bark of the cinchona tree ; in Kivu and in the East Province, distilleries extract — for exportation — the essential oils of perfume plants : geraniol, rhodinol, citronelol.

Finally, large concerns have often set up specialized departments which supply them with the products they need : carbonic acid for breweries, acetylene for shipyards, compressed oxygen and industrial glycerine for workshops that manufacture articles made of metal.

### D.

#### Mechanical Industry.

Over 50 shipyards and railroad workshops take care not only of the maintenance and repair of boats and locomotives, but also of assembling machinery, railroad cars, and boats of all kinds.

About 100 workshops assemble and repair bicycles. As for garages — which range from modest repair shops to vast specialized enterprises — there are nearly 500 of them. More than 700,000 bicycles, in addition to 50,000 motor vehicles, assure them of steady business.

Besides, in the course of the last few years, factories producing articles in great demand have come into existence : articles such as nails, copper wire and cables, cans, metal drums and metal trunks, metal containers, garbage cans, aluminum and enamelled iron household articles. The fact that all these are now manufactured in the Congo has made it possible to reduce imports proportionally. Recently, new items have been added to this first list, such as mattresses and metal bedsteads, office furniture, metal frames, and construction materials.

## E.

### Miscellaneous Industries.

Many other business activities supplement the main branches of industry.

Breweries have been amazingly prosperous, especially since the war : indeed, their annual output exceeds some 32,000,000 gallons. The production of carbonated water and lemon soda trails far behind that of beer ; the 40 establishments that manufacture them hardly exceed one-sixth of the output of beer.

On the other hand, the refrigeration industry has been carefully organized. Big refrigeration concerns have been set up in Katanga, Kivu, and between the ports of the Lower Congo and Upper Katanga ; for this purpose, the carriers utilize holds of ships, freight cars, and trucks that are both isothermal and refrigerated. Ice is generally manufactured in annexes of the breweries, but sometimes also in the fishing centers of Katanga and the Lower Congo. The various cold storage warehouses of

the country have a capacity of 30,000 cubic meters ; this amount will soon be raised to 40,000, thus making it possible to preserve 14,000 tons of merchandise.

Hundreds of trades are now part and parcel of the urban centers : printing, the jewelry business, basket-weaving, laundering, multigraphing, and the hotel industry ; to these can be added the plastic product industry which — in Katanga — specializes in insulators, insulating sheaths and cases, hose, and belts.

Besides, there are many small businesses dealing in food : bakeries, confectionary factories, dairies, chocolate, cracker and biscuit, and jam factories ; they easily number more than 350.

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In fact, as can be clearly seen from this enumeration, the Congo has already gone very far in the direction of being self-sufficient ; the results achieved up to now, far from constituting a goal, are merely steps in the evolution of a country that is rapidly coming of age. The future realization of the grandiose project of Inga will bring with it the fullest possible expansion of the country's young industries ; an expansion of such proportions as to justify the hope that it will be possible not only to provision the home market, but also to create around Inga vast industrial units which will work directly for exportation.



CHAPTER VI  
**THE SOURCES  
OF ENERGY**

## SUMMARY

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## 1.

### Fuel.

The entire exploitation of the natural wealth of the Congo, as well as any improvement in the living conditions of its population, depends largely on the rational utilization of its sources of energy.

A series of closely interwoven factors are at work here. Indeed, the sparse population and the scarcity of technicians call for mechanization, which alone will make possible a policy of high salaries and, consequently, a rise in the standard of living. This mechanization, indispensable for a high return on investments, will encourage the creation of new industries ; it will assure, through a high degree of productivity, effective competition with foreign products. But highly developed mechanization requires a general electrification that will furnish the factories and the population with extremely cheap electric current.



At the present time, this last condition is far from being a reality. Thus wood still furnishes about half the energy put at the disposal of the Congolese economy.

It is evident that the importance of wood as a fuel is diminishing every day in favor of other and more economical sources of energy ; on the other hand, the protection of ligneous wealth which perhaps tomorrow will be called upon to furnish products and by-products of more definite value, has become stricter with time. But for the moment it must be conceded that wood is the only source of energy at the disposal of a majority of the population for domestic use in the villages of the bush, whether for cooking or for heating the huts. A high percentage of the locomotives and tugboats that serve the railroad lines and waterways of secondary importance still use wood and, in spite of a modernization program that has been going on actively for ten years, as late as 1957 steam traction had been replaced by electric or diesel traction in only half the equipment of the transportation companies.

Other fuels than wood — coal and oil, for example — are used by Congolese industry. But Congolese coal is mediocre in quality, and can serve only local industries ; consequently, a part of the coal needed must be imported. As for oil products, they are all imported. Perhaps certain indications point to the existence of oil in the Congolese subsoil, but the first prospecting undertaken has not given the results hoped for. However, a scientific mission has established the existence of methane gas in the deep waters of Lake Kivu, and a pilot factory will make a start on the task of tapping it.

## 2.

### Hydro-electric Energy.

Hydro-electric energy will solve the problems involved in the exploitation of the Congo's natural resources and in the industrialization of the country. The Congo seems privileged in this respect : its available potential is estimated at more than 100 million kilowatts, viz., one-sixth of the world's reserves.

However, until now only a very small part of this gigantic energy has been exploited. This situation is chiefly due to the many technical and financial difficulties involved. Indeed, it is not enough to create gigantic power stations. The enormous sums involved must be amortized by a sufficiently large consumption of electricity. Only a great number of important industries can consume that much electricity. But down to the present time, the stage reached in the Congo's industrial development has permitted the setting up of only a few installations which, although they are of vast proportions, are far from representing the real possibilities of the country.

How are these sources of energy utilized today ?

The first hydro-electric power stations were constructed between the two World Wars. They were built by private enterprises primarily to supply their own factories with electric power; incidentally, they also furnished private individuals with electricity. At the same time, the first companies for the distribution of electricity to the public were created : in 1926, the « Colectric » at Leopoldville ; in 1930, the « Sogelec » at Elisabethville ; in 1939, the « Régideso ».

After the war, within the framework of the Ten Year Plan, a policy was launched with the aim of furnishing cheap electric current to the population as well as to industry, installing power stations in regions favorable to the creation of medium-sized industries, and finally, establishing a certain equilibrium in supplying the various provinces with electricity. This increased the volume of the power provided and assured a better geographical distribution of it.

Thus at the beginning of 1958, about thirty hydro-electric power stations aggregating 525,000 kilowatts were in operation (1). Expansion programs will make it possible to increase this power to 1,250,000 kilowatts in the near future.

The public power stations — located chiefly at Sanga and Zongo for the region of Leopoldville, and at Tshopo for the region of Stanleyville — supply only one-sixth of the electricity consumed in the country. The other five-sixths are provided by the private powers stations, whether it is a question of vast installations like those of the Union Minière or of more modest enterprises not exceeding 10,000 or 5,000 or even 1,000 kilowatts.

At the present time, the production of electricity is concentrated chiefly in Katanga. In that province, four power stations belonging to the group of the Union Minière supply the industrial

zones not only of Upper Katanga but also of Northern Rhodesia; they represent two-thirds of the power generated in the Belgian Congo. Moreover, Katanga taken as a whole furnishes four-fifths of the electric power produced in the Congo.

It is clear that the two sectors — public and private — supplying electricity in the Congo today share very unequally in its production. This fact is accounted for by the immense needs of metallurgy in Katanga. Producing one ton of tin requires 1,500 kilowatts ; producing one ton of copper or zinc, between 4,000 and 5,000 kilowatts. However, various factors may, in the near future, correct the existing disparity between public and private production of electricity and thus appreciably increase its general consumption.

Among these factors should be mentioned the increase in the number of small and medium-sized enterprises throughout the country, and the increased needs of native cities and urban centers, all of which are in the process of expansion. Another factor is the government policy of favoring an increase in salaries; this policy is bound to bring about a demand for a greater supply of electricity at low cost. The problem of the electrification of small centers is one of the important questions of the day. Down to the present time, the small centers have been dependent on the steam generating stations, but the creation of « micro-power stations » which could service certain secondary agglomerations is under consideration ; there is even a possibility that some kind of nuclear power station will be installed for the benefit of regions where supplying electric energy would be too costly.

But the chief factor — the one that will certainly cause a complete revolution in the industrial life of the country and will mark the dawn of a new era — is unquestionably the utilization of the enormous latent power resources of the Congo River not far from its mouth, in the region of Inga.

(1) To this should be added about 100 steam generating stations with a capacity of approximately 90,000 kilowatts and about 1,000 generating sets.



### 3. Tomorrow : Inga.

At Inga, the Congo River forms an immense bend around projecting rocks ; at that point it rushes headlong in falls that bring about a drop of over 300 feet in the river's level. Thus a gigantic source of energy is created. Indeed, Inga constitutes a spot unique in the world, a spot which offers power reserves that are practically unlimited ; their utilization will make it possible to supply electricity at a lower price than that charged by the other high-powered generating stations.

This spot had attracted attention as early as 1927. Twenty years later, the question was taken up again and studied carefully, and in 1956 the exploitation of this enormous source of energy was decided upon. Realizing the full importance of this decision, King Baudouin took up the subject at his first cabinet meeting after his accession to the throne, and expressly declared : « The undertaking is unusual in its scope... With the exploitation of Inga a new era begins. »

The work that has been planned for the exploitation of Inga — involving the construction of dams and power stations — will be spread over many years. It is calculated that the investments will exceed 150 billion francs and, when the work is completed, the power stations will have a capacity of 25 million kilowatts. Such a capacity represents an annual power of 240 billion kilowatt-hours ; viz., a power equal to one-quarter of the annual output of the United States, and superior to that of Germany, Austria, Belgium, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Portugal, and Turkey put together.

Such power is equivalent to the annual consumption of 100 million tons of coal.

In fact, what is going to be created at Inga will be nothing less than the most powerful hydro-electric power station in the world.

Before undertaking such a task, it was necessary to be sure of finding enough consumers. Even before research was begun in earnest, the prospects were reassuring because a rapid increase was already apparent in the consumption of energy in the world, as well as an expansion of the electro-metallurgical and electro-chemical industries. Right now, the chief project concerns the installation near Inga of a vast plant to process aluminium. But other plans are also being worked on : they deal with the production of ferrous alloys, wood pulp, nitrogen, and isotopes.

Inga, in addition to its immense hydro-electric potential, offers another advantage : it is located near the sea ; only about 25 miles as the crow flies separate it from Matadi, the leading Congolese seaport. This will enable the industries that establish themselves in the vicinity to avoid heavy transportation charges which, elsewhere, add to the cost of the products transported over long distances from the moment they leave the factory until they are put on board the ship. This is indeed a tremendous advantage.

Inga has been called a « Congolese Ruhr » ; this is a very conservative estimate and it is certain that Inga's importance will be far greater. The whole undertaking is based on an entirely new conception. Until the present time, resources in coal and iron have brought about the development of industrial zones, whose importance has been based especially on the manufacture of steel and its derivatives. At Inga, an original industrial zone will be created that will profit simultaneously by the large-scale utilization of hydro-electric energy and the possibilities of direct and easy connections with the leading consumer countries.

This will be the most important achievement of its kind in the world. It will stimulate the establishment in the Congo of foreign industries attracted by the low cost and the abundance of electric power. It will completely transform the economy of the Congo in the space of a few years and convert the latter into a great industrial country offering a wide range of plants having an all-inclusive equipment. Furthermore — through the pumping of water, — Inga will make possible the irrigation of surrounding zones that are almost deserts today. Finally, it will give a new stimulus to Belgian industries — at the present time handicapped by prohibitive prices in the mother country — and will thus integrate them into a vast Belgo-Congolese unit.

Already, the various stages planned for the carrying out of this gigantic program are becoming clear ; of the 25 million kilowatts expected when the work is completed, the first stage in the undertaking will already furnish 1,500,000, and it has been calculated that the first kilowatt-hour will be produced in 1964.

## CHAPTER VII TRANSPORTATION



## SUMMARY

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## 1. The Congolese Transportation System.

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More than 8,700 miles of navigable waterways served by a commercial flotilla of some 1,500 units, 3,000 miles of railroad tracks on which more than 8,000 cars run, nearly 90,000 miles of roads used by 50,000 vehicles, interior airlines totaling 21,753 miles — such is the Congo's achievement in the field of transportation.

The Congolese transportation system forms a very complex network. Originally, the Congo River and its tributaries seemed an ideal means for carrying both merchandise and passengers.

The Congo possesses a basin which is the second largest in the world. It is located on both sides of the equator and benefits by abundant rainfall ; because of its geographical position, the river is assured of a very regular flow of water over the greater part of its course.

However, in several spots, impassable waterfalls and rapids appear. These falls and rapids are found above Stanleyville, and especially below Leopoldville, which they cut off from the sea by spreading out over a distance of 187 miles as far as Matadi. If the gigantic fluvial system of the Congo was to be used in its entirety, the navigable reaches of the river had to be linked by rail.

The Congolese transportation system thus consisted at first of a « water-rail » unit ; it was prolonged by railroads leading, on the one hand, to the natural wealth of the Mayumbe, and on the other hand, to the industrial centers of the East.

On this first network, roads have been grafted progressively, covering the country with links that have become more and more closely knit since motor traction made its appearance.

Finally, aviation appeared, completing the system with swift connections.

## A.

### Navigable Waterways.

The sum total of the Congolese navigable waterways, which is the starting point and the basis of the Congolese transportation system, represents a low cost factor indispensable to the valorization of numerous products.

Two great companies come very near to monopolizing commercial transportation by water. In the East, it is the Compagnie des Chemins de Fer du Congo Supérieur aux Grands Lacs

Africains (Upper Congo and Great African Lakes Railroad Company) which, over a distance of more than 1,000 miles, operates boats on the navigable reaches of the Congo River above Stanleyville and also on Lake Tanganika. As for the rest of the country, transportation over some 8,500 miles of waterways is taken care of by the Office d'Exploitation des Transports Coloniaux — otherwise known as Otraco — (Colonial Transportation Office). However, certain transportation services are supplied directly by the Colony ; for example, the lines of Lake Moëro and the connection between Matadi and the sea.

The Otraco therefore appears to be the principal operator of the navigable waterways. It is an autonomous government agency. Its units run in three leading sectors : the Congo and its tributaries as far as Stanleyville, the Kasai and its tributaries, and Lake Kivu. Furthermore, the Otraco operates the port facilities of Boma, Matadi, Leopoldville, Coquilhatville, etc.

In the course of the last few years, inland navigation in the Congo has undergone great improvements. The ports — with their 130 derricks — have been fitted out, enlarged, and mechanized to an extent rarely found in Europe. Their warehouses have been made more adequate ; their installations have been equipped with radar, and luminous beaconing has been installed all along the Congo River and certain tributaries, and also on Lake Tanganika. Thus, night navigation, which had been impossible up to that time, became a reality ; as a result, transportation time has been appreciably reduced. Moreover, the fleet itself has been modernized. Gradually, the old system of the wood-burning boiler, very slow because it necessitated many stops to replenish the wood supply, and, furthermore, destructive of forests, was replaced by the use of diesel engines. Today they furnish half the power of the Otraco and CFL fleets. Finally, the towing of barge trains transporting merchandise in their holds all along the waterways has been considerably improved by new methods based on propulsion and the use of boats of the integrated tow-boat type.

Keeping the inland waterways fit for navigation is a function of the government. The latter sees to it that dredging operations



are performed, as well as beaconing, the marking of navigable channels, and the removal of tree trunks that have fallen in the river. To these tasks a new one has recently been added: the fight against the water hyacinth. This plant has proliferated very rapidly, creating impassable obstructions in certain sectors of the rivers and blocking navigation. All means have been set in motion to check it: the use of powerful herbicides, the opening of new channels, etc.

Maritime access to the Congo is ensured by a reach of 86 miles which takes seagoing ships as far as Matadi. Luminous beaconing has been installed on this reach, thus permitting night navigation. Here are found the Congolese seaports: Banana at the very mouth of the river; Boma, which handles the production of the Mayumbe; Ango-Ango, an oil port; and finally, Matadi. Through these ports, nesting in the neck of the river, most of the Congo's commercial traffic passes: that is, two-thirds of the merchandise imported and exported. The balance of the traffic is routed either toward Lobito, which serves Katanga mainly, or toward the ports of the east coast of Africa. (1)

Matadi is — together with Leopoldville — the nerve center of Congolese commerce and transportation. Within the last few years, Leopoldville, which is the terminal of most of the inland navigation lines and also the breaking-off point for most of the transportation going toward the sea or coming from it, has had its port installations considerably enlarged. Matadi, the leading seaport of the Congo, is connected with Leopoldville by a direct railroad line; half the merchandise entering or leaving the Congo utilizes its quays. Here, an expansion program under way will double the port capacity of Matadi and raise it to some four million tons a year; further plans are being considered that would raise this annual capacity to about ten million tons.

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(1) By virtue of an Anglo-Belgian agreement concluded in 1921, merchandise leaving and entering the Congo is granted freedom of transit across Tanganika. This agreement also granted the establishment of Belgian bases at Kigoma, on Lake Tanganika and at Dar-es-Salaam, a port on the Indian Ocean. The installations of these bases have recently been enlarged.

## B. Railroads.

In 1898, the railroad line from Leopoldville to Matadi was completed. It was the Congo's first railroad and opened up the entire country at one and the same time to civilization and economic progress. Bypassing the unnavigable cataracts of the river, it made possible the junction between the inland waterways and the sea. Shortly after, another railroad line spanned the distance between Boma and the confines of the Mayumbe, where wood, oil, fruit, and cocoa were produced. Today these two lines are operated by Otraco.

The Compagnie des Chemins de Fer du Congo Supérieur aux Grands Lacs Africains — the C.F.L. — linked the navigable sections of the river above Stanleyville by rail and prolonged this line by means of a junction with Albertville; thus direct communication between the river and Lake Tanganika was established and, through the latter, direct connection with the British railroad system serving the ports of the Indian Ocean.

In the Northeast, the Vicicongo Company constructed — between the two World Wars — a narrow-gauge railroad that serves the cotton and gold-producing regions and connects them, on the one hand, with the Congo Basin, and, on the other, with the Sudan and French Equatorial Africa.

But the most important railroad system is operated, in the Southeast of the country, by the Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Bas-Congo au Katanga (Lower Congo and Katanga Railroad Company), otherwise known as the B.C.K. This railroad system, which is more than 1,500 miles in length, is a complex one: it connects Katanga with the Kasai River by crossing the head of the Congo River at Bukama and also links up Katanga with the Benguela Railways which carry the products of Congolese industry as far as Lobito; at the same time, it provides connections with the railroad systems of South Africa.

Until recently, no junction existed between the lines of the C.F.L. and those of the B.C.K. In 1956, this gap was filled : the two railroads were joined between Kamina and Kabalo and now form a unit of 2,200 miles of railroad tracks. Now it has become possible — without changing trains — to cover as great a distance as 20,000 miles on tracks that stretch across the entire section of Africa situated south of the Sahara ; furthermore, the leading industrial zones of the country are thus kept in touch with the two oceans. This junction — passing through Belgian Congo — connects directly Lobito, on the Atlantic, with Dar-es-Salaam, on the Indian Ocean, Lake Tanganika constituting the only break.

Like the river fleet, the railroad matériel has been thoroughly modernized. The adoption of one and the same gauge has made it possible to standardize the railroad systems of the Southeast ; on the B.C.K., more than 300 miles have been almost completely equipped with diesel engines. Two facts will show the importance of the development of railroad transportation during these last few years : within a period of ten years, from 1946 to 1955 inclusive, the tonnage of merchandise transported has more than doubled, and in a little more than fifteen years the number of passengers who have used the railroads rose from less than 300,000 before the war to more than one and a half million.

### C. Roads.

Railroads and navigable waterways constitute the backbone of Congolese transportation. On this basic outline, rigorous by its very nature, a network of roads has been grafted. Adaptable and branching out very freely, this network is made up of roads linking waterways and railroad lines, serving remote regions, and weaving a more and more closely knit pattern from frontier to frontier.

The construction of these roads encountered great obstacles from the start : some created by the torrid climate where torrential rains and burning heat attack the surfacing of the roads ; others occasioned by the extremely variable nature of the Congolese soil which prevents the use of a uniform technique.

It was after World War I, with the introduction of motor traction on a larger and larger scale, that the Congolese road system began making real progress. Today there are about 87,000 miles of roads, and about one-quarter of this mileage consists of highways with hard surfacing and easily drained roadbeds that make them adequate for two-way heavy tonnage traffic. Several public transportation companies assure service over some 19,000 miles of these roads.

The end of the last war witnessed a new stage in the development of the road network. With the aim of strengthening the economic substructure of the country, the Ten Year Plan considered the building of new highways and side roads intended to serve the agricultural and industrial regions. After a start had been made, the initial plan was revised and the total new road mileage was reduced to 3,100. At the same time it was decided to improve the existing road network by straightening the layouts of the old roads, mechanizing the maintenance service, strengthening the roadbeds, and especially by doing away with ferries and replacing them by bridges. More than 500 of these have already been constructed. As a result, inland transportation has been accelerated, thus providing a new source of profit for the country's general economy.

### D. Airlines.

An air transportation system already existed in the Belgian Congo as early as 1920 ; this was a line of hydroplanes skirting the Congo River from Leopoldville to Lisala. Technical difficulties brought about its rapid disappearance.



From 1923 on, the Belgian airline known as the Sabena gradually expanded its activities in the transportation field, and as early as 1930, it linked Belgium and the Congo by a regular air service. Later on, other Belgian and foreign airlines were to fill in the network.

At present, there are three international airfields in the Congo : D.C.7s are able to land at Leopoldville, and D.C.6s at Stanleyville. Eventually, these airfields may be transformed so that heavy jet-planes will also be able to land. From these fields a number of interior airlines branch out : 26 radiate from Leopoldville, 10 from Stanleyville, and 4 use Elisabethville as their base. Leopoldville is the turn-table of both the interior and the international air traffic ; as of today, its airport possesses the longest civilian runway in the world.

The Congolese interior air network is the longest in Africa ; it totals about 22,000 miles. It affords fast transportation not only for passengers and mail, but also for fresh food which, after being taken out of cold storage, can now be shipped directly to the most remote regions of the country. This tremendous expansion of aviation has brought the Congo a considerable improvement in living conditions, whether it is a question of almost daily contact with Europe or of provisioning isolated posts. Supplementing transportation by rail, roads, and waterways, aviation completes the work undertaken.

## 2.

### The Transportation Policy.

The organization of Congolese transportation is based essentially on close co-operation between the government and private enterprise.

Private companies, as concessionaires, are entrusted with the task of creating and exploiting transportation networks, and are generally given certain guarantees and advances of capital. These companies have accumulated investments valued at 20 billion francs, to which can be added 12 billion through the provisions of the Ten Year Plan. Otraco alone accounts for half the total sum invested.

These companies have been set up in various ways, according to a policy characterized by flexibility and adaptability. Thus Otraco has been established as a « personalized » government agency whose entire capital belongs to the government. The

B.C.K. operates railroads that have been built by concessionary companies which were, besides itself, the Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Katanga (Katanga Railroad Company) and the Société des Chemins de Fer Léopoldville-Katanga-Dilolo (Leopoldville-Katanga-Dilolo Railroad Company). As a matter of fact, every case is in a class by itself and is treated individually.

But considering the direct influence of transportation on the general economy of the country, the government has reserved for itself the right to control transportation rates.

A transportation rate policy has been worked out with the aim of assuring the public of the best service at the most reasonable rates, and of making the different regions of the Congo participate harmoniously in the commercial currents. This policy was put into concrete form in 1951, in an important reform which has unified all categories of merchandise for all the Congolese carriers.

The principles that have inspired this reform are the following :

- Luxury products must pay for products of low unit value ;
- Rates must not exceed what the product can bear ;
- A given product must not be charged higher rates for local transportation than for exportation ;
- Transportation rates must take tolls into consideration ;
- The sum total of the receipts must furnish the carriers with the financial resources they need.

The transportation rate policy thus created divides merchandise into thirteen categories according to value, essential utility for the country, and transportation difficulties.

The rates are applicable throughout the entire transportation system and follow a gradually diminishing scale according to the distance. A special inter-regional rate schedule is sometimes granted to certain regional manufactures. As for agricultural

products, the basic rate applied varies according to a sliding scale which goes hand in hand with the prices obtained in the world markets.

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Various organizations take a hand in formulating transportation policies.

The Commission des Transports Intérieurs (Commission for Inland Transportation) operates at Leopoldville. It is composed of civil servants, and of representatives of the public and also of the local heads of transportation companies ; it studies problems of a practical nature and co-ordinates the services of the networks.

At Brussels, the different companies have set up a Comité des Transporteurs au Congo Belge (Committee of Carriers in the Belgian Congo), where problems of common interest are discussed. Likewise at Brussels the Conseil Supérieur des Transports (Superior Transportation Council) has been set up ; this is a decentralized government agency which affords an opportunity for exchanges of views among representatives of the government, the public, and the transportation organizations.

The extent of the effort made by the carriers with the government's aid appears clearly if we compare statistics of the past few years. The number of passengers carried has sextupled, increasing from fewer than 350,000 in 1939 to about 2,000,000 some fifteen years later. Commercial traffic has quadrupled in the same period, rising from less than 5,000,000 to about 20,000,000 tons.

In order to cope with such an increase, the carriers have had to see to it that both the quality and the quantity of the materiel required were satisfactory, and that the rates fixed were expedient. In order to do this, they have had to speed up the



« turn about » of all their conveyances, mechanize their entire equipment, and employ the most modern methods of organization, while at the same time maintaining the stability of their companies and guaranteeing dividends to their stockholders.

### 3.

## The Tourist Industry.

Roads, railroads, waterways, and airlines now make traveling easy anywhere in the Congo. This transportation network has given rise to a new activity that seems destined to assume vast proportions : the tourist industry.

It is already adding more than half a billion francs to the country's economy every year. According to estimates, foreign tourists alone bring in a quarter of a billion francs.

This industry starts off with favorable factors. The most important one is precisely the network of organized transportation. Today it is easy to make a complete tour of the Congo in public conveyances ; already more and more travel agencies are offering a wide range of excursions for lump sums. The second favorable factor is the great interest aroused by the country itself, its population, and its natural scenery. This natural scenery presents many aspects : equatorial forests, volcanic regions, savannas, great mountain lakes, the snowy peaks of Ruwenzori, and national parks where wild animals live. Finally, there is a third factor, acting as a connecting link between the first two : the existence of a hotel industry which, after having been conducted for a long time in a hit or miss fashion, has recently made real progress, not only in regard to the number of rooms available but also from the point of view of comfort and courtesy. Right now, the Congolese hotel industry has more than 7,000 beds to offer in some 300 hotels.

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No doubt there is still room for improvement, and the success of the young tourist industry depends entirely on the judicious utilization of the factors mentioned.

As far as transportation is concerned, it seems that the road network has the chief claim to attention. At the present time, it can be considered that if the eastern and the northeastern parts of the country possess satisfactory roads, a great deal of work remains to be done in the other regions; the carrying out of the road building program laid down by the Ten Year Plan will bring about notable improvements in this field.

The task of making the most of the principal beauty spots has already begun and is being carried on with the help of local organizations such as the Touring-club of the Congo, the automobile clubs, and the tourists' information bureaus. But if remarkable attractions for tourists can be found in all parts of the country, the eastern part seems best adapted to the development of tourism; there one can not only find the greatest variety of scenery within an area that is both comparatively small and conveniently visited, but the fairly temperate climate of the region offers the tourist a pleasanter stay and makes traveling possible at any time of the year.

This difference between the two sections of the country is reflected in the facilities that are offered to tourists: it is especially in the East that the travel agencies have organized services and arranged convenient excursions; it is also mainly there that the hotels offer the comfort that the visitor has a right to expect. Furthermore, the increasing rush of tourists in the East could quickly exceed the present lodging capacity of the region and this would impose an accelerated rhythm on the expansion of the Congolese hotel industry. One simple fact will show the growth of tourism: partial statistics reveal that there was a total of more than 11,000 visitors for 1956 (the actual figures are even larger); half of these visitors, who generally remain in the Congo about two weeks, came purely for sightseeing.

Gradually the authorities turned their attention to supporting this budding tourist industry. In Brussels, the Office d'Informa-

tion et des Relations Publiques pour le Congo Belge et le Ruanda-Urundi (Information and Public Relations Office for the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi) — a government-sponsored organization — takes care of everything that concerns Congolese tourism: organizing foreign propaganda, making the most of the natural scenery, establishing relations with agencies and with the authorities, keeping in touch with big international organizations, etc. It has a local office at Leopoldville. A Conseil consultatif du Tourisme (Advisory Tourist Council), made up of experts, is attached to the Information and Public Relations Office. Aside from this Council, in the Congo there are also a government bureau dealing with administrative matters, and a Conseil Supérieur du Tourisme (Superior Tourist Council) which gives its opinions to the governor general.

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It seems that within the next few years the authorities will have to concern themselves with improving the Congo's hotel industry. For a long time, the establishment of a chain of first-class hotels has been considered — at least in the regions of the Northeast — and also the setting up of a hotel school to train native personnel. Indeed, considering the wealth of natural scenery, the constant improvement in the roads, the regularity and the quality of transportation facilities, the excursions organized by the travel agencies, the interest already aroused to the point of bringing more and more international travelers from Europe and America, it is evident that there ought to be a hotel industry of good quality to handle the tourist situation; otherwise, an industry which already occupies the twelfth place in the economy of the Congo will be doomed to stagnation. Financial help is a prerequisite factor in the new stimulus needed by the hotel industry, and this aspect of the problem is being studied right now.



CHAPTER VIII  
**THE WATER SUPPLY**

## SUMMARY

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## Problems and Solutions.

Whether it is a question of industrial or domestic needs, water supply in the tropics constitutes an important problem which is both economic and social.

Water needs — strongly influenced by the country's climate — are much more extensive than would appear at first sight. Human consumption of water for drinking purposes and hygiene, which amounts to some 20 quarts a day in the temperate zones, goes as high as 50 and sometimes even 200 quarts a day in the Congo. The smallest establishment — a school, an office, or a dispensary — has daily water needs that exceed 25 cubic meters. Cattle drink as much as 50 quarts per head a day. In the industrial sphere, it may take 10 cubic meters of water to process one gram of gold or one kilogram of tin ; every kilogram of raw materials put to use in the textile industry requires from 50 to 8,000 quarts ; beer, oil, rubber, tanned hides, and many other